

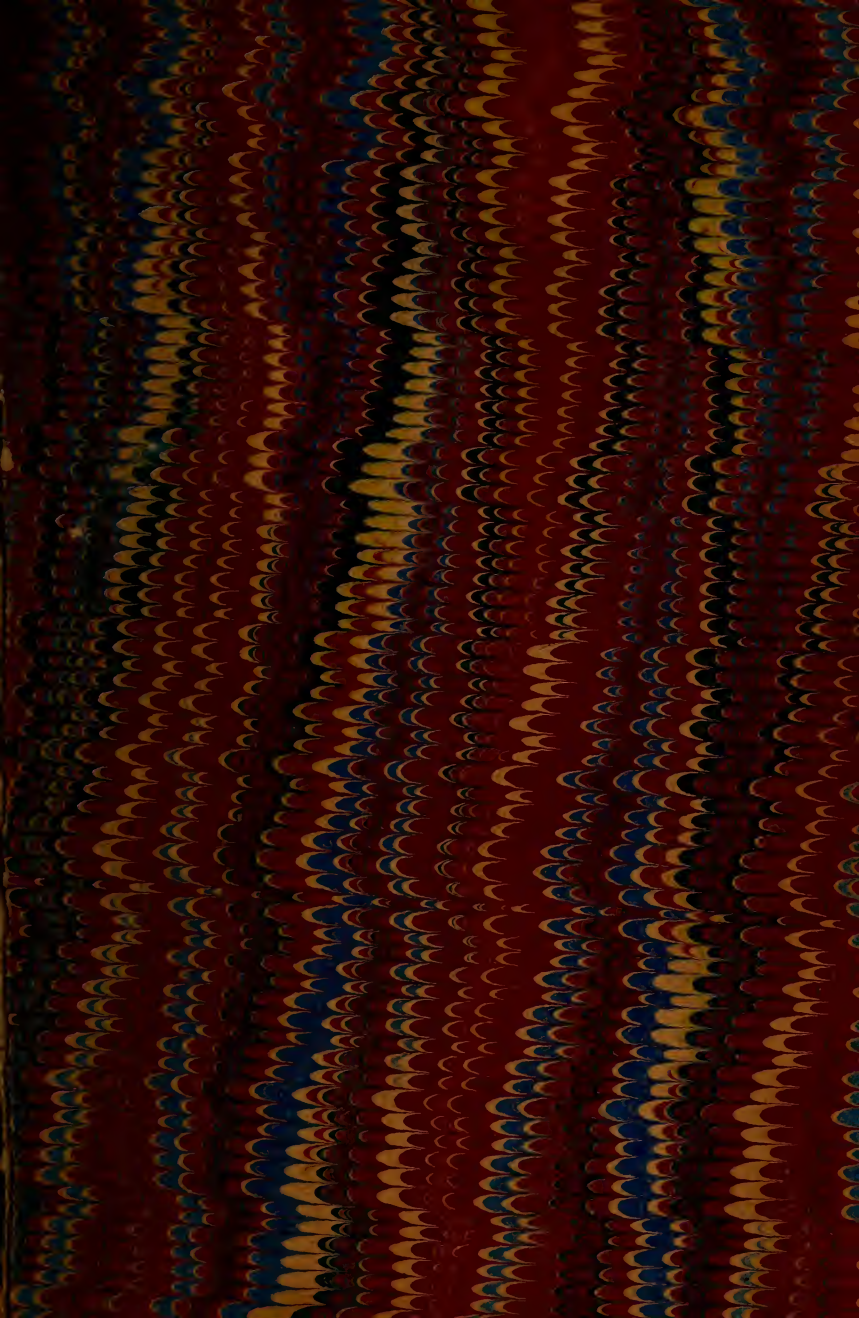
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INCIDENTS

IN THE

L I F E

OF

MILTON W. STREETER,

THE JEALOUS AND INFATUATED MURDERER,  
WHO MURDERED HIS YOUNG AND  
BEAUTIFUL WIFE,

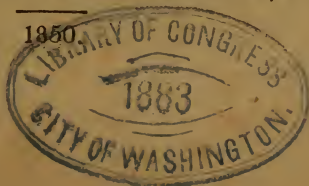
ELVIRA W. STREETER,

AT SOUTHBRIDGE, MASS., OCTOBER 23, 1848: CONTAINING ALL  
THE INTERESTING INCIDENTS OF HIS LIFE—ALL THE PAR-  
TICULARS OF THE MURDER—HIS TRIAL, WHICH  
OCCURRED IN JUNE, 1849, SENTENCE, &c.

~~~~~  
"Oh blood! oh murder! loud she crieth!  
Shrieks of terror wildly rise;  
These, the phrenzied man defieth!—  
Reft are now the tenderest ties."

PUBLISHED BY H. F. TINGLEY.

A. W. PEARCE, PRINTER, PAWTUCKET, R. I.



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Streeter in the act of murdering his wife.





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## CHAPTER I.

Parentage—birth—injury—residence in Vermont.

ON a fine farm situated in the romantic town of Douglas, Worcester Co. Mass., a young couple, who had just entered the marriage relations, commenced a new era in their course of life. Mr. Asa Streeter a native of that town had married Miss Abigail H. Tracy, of Worcester, who thenceforward became Mrs. Streeter. Young, active and enterprising, this couple, united in heart as well as hand, rejoiced in the present, and looked with gladness to the undeveloped future. The past had been fruitful of good in the formation of habits of virtue and integrity. The lessons they had received in the days of childhood and youth, were not lost upon their subsequent lives. Mr. Streeter acquired, and long enjoyed, the reputation of a quiet, inoffensive man, of industrious habits and unquestioned integrity, intelligent, kind and faithful. His young companion possessed a different temperament. Ardent and impulsive, and sometimes even impetuous, she was less judicious than her husband in conducting her domestic affairs; and had less of that stern self-control and winning submissiveness which constitute a distinguished excellence of her sex. Still she was faithful and affectionate, and, generally, well fitted to perform her part in the various duties, and bear a share of the burdens, in all the vicissitudes of life.

The first few months of their married life passed fleetly away, like the spirit of an "enchanted castle." The dream of happiness which so often occupies the waking hours of the young, was converted, in their case, into a blissful reality. The hours and days ran by like so many timid spirits, anxious to hide themselves in the unfathomed past. No avocation is so calculated to afford enjoyment

in the early period of married life, as that of agriculture. Necessarily separated, more or less, from the busy world, the youthful pair found their enjoyment in each others' society. Busied in gathering the treasures of Providence out of the bosom of the earth, like gold from the mines, their time was spent pleasantly and usefully in the mutual effort to render each other happy.

The summer had come and gone ; autumn had strewn its fruit and cast its leaves, and then disappeared ; winter had spread its mantle, enjoyed its sleep, and then risen and departed ; and spring had again approached with its smiles and its sunshine, to open the bud, bring out the young leaf, expand the flower, and prepare the earth for the fruit and the blessings of another harvest moon. 'The most charming month in all the year had come, dancing after April showers and arrayed in its gorgeous attire, like a maid for the bridal. 'The perfumery of nature's own toilet, so grateful to the senses, filled the whole air. And the teeming population of the earth began to move with new life, and with smiles and gayety answering to the loveliness of the vernal month.

‘ And all were free and wandering,  
And all exclaimed to all they met,  
That never did the summer bring  
So gay a feast of roses yet.”

In the very midst of these enchantments, another immortal appeared—another pledge of virtuous affection was born—the young wife presented her husband with a transcript of himself ; and they became parents. It was their first child, born on the 28th of May, 1820, and he was named Milton Whipple Streeter. Little did those parents then think, as they gazed upon him, that the little harmless babe bore about him the elements of a murderer !—Little did they imagine that future years would rend their hearts with the keenest agony from the terrible deed of blood which their child would commit ! No one can unfold the pages of the future ; and it is well that we cannot. 'The weight of the future bearing upon the present might



crush the spirit. The mother, as she gazes fondly upon her dear infant so fresh and so promising, will start with terror as she thinks for a moment what *may* be its terrible fate. But God, for her sake, allows her not, as she looks towards the vista of its coming years, to read its destiny. She would shrink from the mighty task of toil and of trial through which she must pass in the voyage of life.

But that lovely infant might not have been born a murderer—might not have enclosed, in its moral nature, a principle of brutal outrage upon the dearest relations of life. Adventitious circumstances, occurring in infancy, or even later in life, sometimes exert a controlling influence over the whole period of individual existence. It might have been so with that young spirit.

Days and months, golden winged, flew quickly past. Joy filled the measure of the parents, and seemed to lighten their labor, as they watched the developments of future manhood in their first born child.

Meantime they exchanged the peaceful avocations of farming for the din and confusion of a cotton factory. Obligated to gain a livelihood by their own industry, they sought the surest and most productive labor. Living in a town bordering upon the residence and business pursuits of Mr. Slater, so celebrated in the early history of cotton manufacturing in this country, they had good opportunities to enter upon that department of labor and avail themselves of its profits.

It is scarcely possible to imagine what changes have come over the splendid day-dream of American manufactures within the last thirty years! The present affords a living and practical interpretation of what was merely dreamed by the early pioneers in this wonderful enterprise! The simple machinery of other years has given place to "improvements," and change after change has followed, in rapid succession, until scarcely a vestige remains to connect the past with the present. The countless wheels and spindles, of every shape and grade that now form the complete machine, seem, while in motion, like a thing of life, grinding and masticating the raw ma-

terial, and then sending forth the delicate fabric, like a silk-worm weaving the woof of her winding sheet, in preparation for egress into a higher life. But the people composing the mass of operatives, have remained comparatively unchanged. Vastly increased in numbers, they still retain their high character for integrity, virtue and intelligence. Despised by the proud, and shunned by the tinsel-devotees of wealth and fashion, they form a most important link in the great chain of a nation's prosperity, and occupy a most important position in the industrial pursuits of a great people.

The second year of the infant Milton was drawing to its close. The dominion of winter had begun to yield to the imperious demands of a sun begirt with smiles and advancing to its northern goal. The vernal equinox had just passed. The mother, engrossed with the cares and duties of domestic affairs, had arranged the child in a small arm chair, and placed it before the fire. That fire was blazing cheerfully upon the stone hearth. The modern stove, with its tin appendages and its dim, mute heat, had not then driven away the cheerfulness of the old fashioned fire-place. The rough jambs, the sooty crane, the pendant crane hooks, the shovel and tongs, the andirons with turned heads, the large forestick, the crackling blaze, the pot o'erhung, and the live coals beneath—all stood as living realities where they now exist only in the dim visions of memory. A smile of gratification, such as mothers only can feel, came over her as she heard the prattle, and saw the expanding intellect of her beautiful boy! With this feeling of pride and pleasure, she left the room for a few moments to perform some necessary duty. That accomplished, she hastened back to her charge. Its screams startled her from her trance of pleasure; and oh! on entering the room, a scene of horror past description met her gaze! The child—by what means no one could tell; it seemed as if an evil genius had stolen in and done it—the child had overturned the chair and fallen forward, throwing its little head, all tender and bare, directly under that forestick, and close upon those burning coals. The

mother sprang like one frantic, and snatched it from its perilous position, then screamed for help. It was too late; the fire had done its fearful work. The infant's head had been literally roasted. The skin peeled off from ear to ear, and from the top of the forehead to the back of the neck. In some spots it was burned to the bone, so that the flesh cleaved off like a piece of roast beef from the bones which it encloses !. A physician was called, the wound was dressed; but so terrible an injury was deemed past all cure. The heat from without had reached the brain, and affected the tissues of that delicate organ. Indeed, the open space—*sincipital fontanel*—usual in the head of a young child, had left bare a portion of the brain itself. The screams of the child were heart-rending; and continued so for a week or more, when it sunk into a state of insensibility, and remained in that condition for several weeks, apparently unconscious either of pain or of existence.

Dr. Geo. Willard, of Uxbridge, assisted by eminent counsel, had charge of the case. For a long time he watched and toiled, constantly and skilfully applying his remedies, and waited the result, expecting that every day would be its last. Such, however, was not the ordaining of Divine Providence. Dark to us may be that Divine ordering which, out of apparent death, permitted life for prospective murder! Earnestly, but, perhaps, vainly, we inquire the reason. There is a wisdom, however, and a goodness in such a course of Providence, which, though we cannot fathom it, we are not permitted to distrust, or censure or condemn. After several weeks, the wound began to heal, and the child to awaken from the deep delirious sleep of cerebral inflammation. But that return of reason was followed by another serious affliction. Spasms supervened, frequent at first, and then less often, but more violent; and these continued, at intervals, for several succeeding years. The experienced medical attendant could easily foresee, that, though the physical injury might be completely healed, the child would never regain the tone and vigor of his intellectual faculties.

Medical skill will often do wonders ; but when the mysterious mind is the subject of its effects, it is sometimes shorn of its laurels, and the most judicious applications fall powerless, for good, upon the diseased organ.

It was not until the following July, that the child evinced signs of amendment ; and even then it was of short duration. The healing, which had commenced, was followed by spasms, and these partially subsiding the wound broke out afresh. In August, the child was taken to a sort of private hospital or dispensary, under the care of Dr. Nathaniel Miller, of Franklin. Here he was kept for some weeks, and received considerable benefit. The condition of his parents did not allow of an expensive course of medical treatment. They did all which love, and care, and their limited means would permit. The child was taken from this institution, convalescent. Reason had in a measure resumed her empire ; but the brain and nervous tissues were still subject to those mysterious convulsive shocks, which always derange, and sometimes destroy the mental powers, causing *melancholia*, ill-humor, passion, hallucination, monomania, or perhaps absolute fatuity. Months of tedious watching, and even long years, passed away, before the wound upon the head, was entirely healed. In the meanwhile, the injury produced exfoliation of the bone, and several large pieces passed from the wound in the process of healing. At length, after a lapse of six years, every part of the sore was, for the first time, entirely healed over ; and the youth, who had passed from infancy into the midst of boyhood, presented a head, as bald and bare, as an old man of seventy. But even this cure was not permanent. Often thereafter, in the course of life, the wound would break out and discharge afresh. The child's growth increased, and time now began to unfold the future man. And with the development of his character, he exhibited eccentricities that but too plainly showed the results of the sad catastrophe, which formed an important epoch in his childish life. It was here, doubtless, that he met with those controlling influences—here was laid the foundation



of that irresistably impulsive character,—which afterwards ruled his destiny, and made him the murderer of the wife whom he tenderly loved. Every one must admit that such trifling circumstances do, sometimes, control the lives and destinies of men.

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No State in the Union is more beautifully interspersed with hill and valley than Vermont,—none rendered more delightfully picturesque by its winding streams, its laughing cascades, its verdant meadows, its steep declivities, its precipitious rocks, its lofty mountains and its forests of evergreens, famed in history, all thrown together in the wild disorder of Nature's own loveliness. The tract of country along the declivities of the Green Mountains, early attracted the attention of emigrants, both from the grandeur of its scenery, the productiveness of its soil, and the salubrity of its climate. The State lies, generally, in a latitude not subject to the extremes of heat and cold. The snows fall upon the mountains of green, but not to remain throughout the year, in defiance of a summer's sun.

The heat of summer is sometimes intense ; but, generated by the very heat, the thunders peal and the lightnings dance along the rugged hill sides, and showers leap from mountain to mountain, across the forests and meadows, drinking up the beams of the burning sun, and reviving the drooping earth! Then the gentle breezes sweep the mountains and play along the hills and valleys, bearing coolness, and health, and vigor in their course. No State is more healthy, and none bears a more hardy, hospitable, generous and chivalrous population. It is famed in history for the bravery of its indomitable "Green Mountain Boys," in the war of the revolution ; and stands unrivaled for the dignified course it took with reference to the conflicting claims of New York and New Hampshire to the sovereignty of its territory.

On the southern border of this State, adjoining Massachusetts, lies the pleasant town of Whitingham, wedged in under the eastern declivity of the Green Mountains, clipped, on its southwest corner, by the transit of the Deerfield

river, and intersected by several other streamlets of pure and crystal waters. Its surface is broken, and its scenery greatly diversified. Rock and river, hill, mountain and valley, verdant in summer, but white in winter, all meet in unstudied magnificence, and present the greater charms from their wild contiguity.

To this sequestered spot, the home of thrift, of virtue and of happiness, the young Streeter was conveyed by his parents, and became a youthful farmer. Blessed with other children, the parents were anxious to provide for the wants of a growing family and bring them up apart from the evil influences of more populous towns. Consequently, in the spring of 1829, they sought this retirement, and entered upon the labors and the rewards of agriculture. Here, surrounded by everything calculated to promote the growth of virtue, their hapless, first born son spent about seven years of the most interesting and important period of his life. And here commenced, in some measure, the developments of the future man. The index figure began to rise up and point off towards a dark and boisterous expanse, not so much of crime, as of wild unstudied impetuosity of character. Deficient in intellect, dull of perception, "hard to learn," he was, nevertheless, impulsive, irascible, impetuous and almost entirely without caution. And yet he was a youth of deep emotion: his attachments were strong, his resentments sudden, but ephemeral, and his feelings tinged with melancholy; but, except in occasional outbursts, were seldom seen through the unmeaning lineaments of his countenance. The injury of his childhood had evidently exerted an influence upon his moral and intellectual conformation. He was not a *maniac*, in the common acceptation; he was not insane, intellectually; and yet he was subject to a species of moral aberration—to use the language of M Pinel, *mania sans déliré*—in consequence of which he acted from impulse, or a heedless impetuosity of feeling, not under a complete control of the will. It was this opening condition of his mind that wore a fearful aspect with reference to the future.

During the years spent in the quiet pursuits of agricul-

ture, he was sent to school, yet made but little progress in learning. He was under good moral training, yet, without appearing vicious or ungovernable, he showed the same want of perception. And he seemed, also, to evince a want of care for his own personal safety. He repeatedly met with accidents and injuries, generally trifling, but sometimes severe. In the early part of his residence in Vermont, he was severely burned with gunpowder. Left alone one evening, with the younger members of the family, while his parents went out to visit a neighbor, he procured a flask of powder, and began making experiments by casting particles of the explosive material upon the fire, for the amusement of the rest. He was warned against it, and earnestly admonished, by his young sisters, to desist. But every effort only inflamed his impetuous temperament, and aroused his foolhardiness; and he, therefore, began to pour the terrible material from the flask upon the fire. The fire caught, flashed and followed the stream from the hearth to his hand, exploded, and shattered the flask and burnt his hand, face and side, severely. It was some weeks before he recovered from the injury here received. Nature, however, with the assistance of art and constant care, at length accomplished the work. He was restored to his usual health; but only to go forth and exhibit other feats of equal folly and rashness. He received little instruction or warning from that terrible experience. He was apt to fall; and would throw himself as if by impulse into the most fearful and perilous positions, and seem unconscious of danger. At work, on one occasion, with several others, he walked barefoot upon the sharp edge of a scythe and did not seem to know it was there, until a severe cut severing the integuments of the bottom of his foot, and laying bare the bones, had warned him of his heedlessness. It was a terrible wound, which confined him to the house for a long time, but added nothing to his stock of prudence or care of himself.—Days passed with the repetition, ever and anon, of disaster and mishaps, with the same result. The school of acci-

dents made but little impression upon his rash and obtuse mind. So passed his life.

The singularities of his character increased with the advance of manhood, and began to throw a sombre hue over the movements of his mind. Still he was comparatively happy,—easily excited, easily affected even to tears, but easily governed. He was unsuspicious, and seldom able to distinguish between the language of sport and pretence, and that of truth and soberness.

He had now reached the sixteenth year of his age. A numerous family and increasing cares and duties demanded a change in the condition of his parents. They resolved to leave the quiet of their rural employment, and again embark in the pursuits of factory operatives. Accordingly, they closed their business, arranged their household, and provided a team; their goods were loaded—chairs, tables, beds, cooking utensils, and “trumpery” in general, were piled upon the vehicle, after the manner of a “moving” in New-England; and in 1836 they bade adieu to their sequestered home in the Green Mountains, and turned their steps towards the region of their former residence.



## CHAPTER II.

Changes of residence—sickness—Quinebaug—Southbridge.

“ Oh ! from the dreams  
Of youth and pleasure, hath not manhood still  
A wild and stormy wakening ?”

THRIVING villages, and even populous towns have sprung up, as if by magic, along the line of railroads that intersect the State of Massachusetts in every direction. Whether with the increase of wealth and population there is a corresponding increase of virtue and happiness, —or whether the latter bear the same ratio to the former as in times past, is a question, too intimately connected with political economy to admit of an easy solution in this place. It is certain, however, that with the increase of population, there is a vast increase of crime, poverty and misery. The great theatres of productive industry, particularly of manufacturing, seem to gather around them a mass of squalid poverty, unknown to the country at any former period.

How far the pursuits of industry, in the large manufacturing establishments that bestud every section of Massachusetts, affect the interests, and even the health of those engaged in them, is another question of deeper import, but far more difficult of solution. It is certain, however, that the female operatives generally suffer incalculable evils, beyond what they themselves are aware of, from the long hours of toil in the rooms, at a high temperature and poorly ventilated, of New-England factories. It is not possible that, with such toil, under such circumstances, they should long retain their health, and the elasticity of youthful spirits. It is very sad to see the future mothers of New-England's population, so fair, so beautiful, so gentle, so intellectual, shut up in noisy rooms and wasting their physical energies, so as to render them incapable of reproducing that indomitable race of men who have heretofore held

dominion over the soil of freedom ! Yet these are evils—not primary, but incidental to all those pursuits of industry, calculated to elevate the social condition, and diffuse happiness throughout an ever-increasing and ever-active population. No blame, in general, should be attached to those conducting the large industrial establishments of this country. It is a noble spirit of enterprise, that invests extensive capital, and plies the loftiest intellect to the perfection of the arts, and the production of the greatest amount of wealth with smallest outlay of labor, suffering and loss of life. Yet under the direction of the most humane and philanthropic, the most intelligent and far-seeing, evils will occur, which no human foresight can prevent. Mingled with the very evils, however, the mechanic arts spring up and advance to perfection, with a growth and a power for the good of man, at once sublime and full of promise. Bear, then, with the evils, which come as dark spirits in the train of superabounding good ; but strive always to correct them.

One evening, a load of goods was seen to approach a small house standing near a factory, known as Fenner's Mill, in Dudley. It had just reached that place from the green hills of Vermont. The family to whom the goods belonged, had already arrived and were to be the occupants of that small dwelling. They consisted of a man, his wife, a son of sixteen, and several daughters. That son was the future murderer. He had reached a period for a change in the mode of his life. From this time, his father and his young sisters were to take their chance and bide their destiny in the labors of a cotton mill. As soon as their household affairs were arranged, Mr. Streeter, and some of the family, entered the mill to toil for others. Here they spent two years. Milton, in later life, looked back upon that period and called it pleasant. The memories interwoven around it, were blissful even to him. Still he acquired the reputation of being ugly, passionate, violent, and sometimes terrible in the impetuosity of his passions ! There were gentle spirits often toiling near him, who feared and trembled,

“ As if a storm passed by,”

when his anger rose to its height. Yet he was gentle as a lamb at the voice of his father, or when the heat of his passion had subsided. Here, too, he betrayed the same unaccountable heedlessness of his personal safety, exhibited all through his life. He would glide among the machinery, into the most dangerous positions, with apparent unconcern for himself. All around him would be aroused to a complete phrenzy of excitement, while he alone was cool ; his face wore always the same dull expression. The nicer shades of deep emotion were seldom seen to mark the lineaments of his countenance. It would seem sometimes, as if he tried to see how near he could tread upon the very verge of destruction, and yet escape it !

On the appearance of the early snow, he was out one day, with others, enjoying the sports of the season—the New-England boyish pastime of “sliding down hill.” More venturesome than the rest, and more dull in perceiving and apprehending danger, he would go into places where others dare not trust themselves. The perils which he risked frequently ended in terrible accidents. On this occasion, he dared so much, as well nigh cost him his life, yet he escaped with merely a severe bruise in the hand. The lessons of past experience had all been lost upon him ; he was obliged to suffer again and bear anew the results of his own carelessness.

Few diseases are more terrible among children than that of *Scarletina* or scarlet fever ; not so much from the eruption itself, as from its destructive influence upon the whole circulation, giving rise to various consequences, which often terminate only with the life of the victim. Especially on a constitution naturally weak, or impaired by adventitious disease, it runs its course with terrible severity. Past his sixteenth year, Milton Streeter was attacked with this disease, which ran a severe course upon his constitution. He was enfeebled in limbs, his head suffered, and the shock was felt upon the whole nervous system. Still in due time he recovered, and returned to his usual labor. His nervous irritability was increased, and his emotions and actions became more impetuous and less under the control of the will.



One of the greatest evils connected with the life of factory operatives is the frequency of change. Trifling circumstances sometimes procure their dismissal from the service of their employers. Or perhaps the desire of higher rewards occasion still more changes. Often, however, the increased remuneration does not counterbalance the expense of removal.

Mr. Streeter was not exempt from the desire of increased gains, and from that and other causes, he made several changes and removals during the succeeding two years. His next position was at a small village on the banks of the Quinebaug river, called Westville, lying partly in Southbridge and partly in Sturbridge. Here he entered the factory, with his children, and resumed its course of life and labor. This factory was an old building, on the left bank of the river, doing a small and rather unprofitable business. His stay was very short. In the course of six months, he had made another movement of about ten miles, to a small village called Fisherville in Thompson, Conn. A few months spent here produced another change, in the father's mind, and gave rise to another removal. He returned to Westville, remained there a few months, and then removed again.

How far these changes of location affected the mind of Milton, now grown to the full stature of manhood, it is impossible to say. Unfortunately, there is always a class of people, connected with populous villages, whose example is decidedly unfavorable to virtue. In all communities there are different orders or classes of mind, of taste and feelings. Minds and tastes of the same class, whether higher or lower, generally consort, more or less, with each other, and form their own habits and associations. There are, in the same class, mutual attractions of thought, habit and enjoyments. Minds of different classes in contiguity repel each other, and have but little natural sympathy or delightful conversation. And the doings of each class seem shut up from the knowledge and participation of individuals of other classes, as much as your secret societies are shut against the intrusion of innovaters, or your churches against the world's people. Members of one

class may look on and behold the doings and enjoyments of another class, without the power of participation, and without comprehending their nature, or the secret charm that binds the class together and makes them happy, in their intercourse with each other.

The vicissitudes in the life of Milton, for the past few years, brought him in contact with minds similar to his own; low, dull, rude, whose tastes and pleasures were utterly uncongenial with the more delicate, virtuous, refined, and intellectual class of minds. That such an association must exert an influence in no wise favorable, upon a mental and moral organization already of a peculiar mould, no one can doubt. He sought for his associates among that class whose minds bore the similitude of his own. Sweeter far to him were the pleasures of sense than those of the intellect. His bosom heaved with deep emotion, but seldom gladdened with the contemplation of moral excellence.

As he grew in life, no man was more susceptible of deep and varied impressions. Trifles often affected him. His nervous sensibilities were drawn to their highest tension, and felt the touch, and vibrated with deep and hollow tones to the most trifling outward influence. Anger, grief and sadness began now to exhibit their more marked characteristics. His cerebral organization was ill suited to bear the shocks imposed upon the nervous system. Seldom was he roused with emotions of any kind, either of grief, or excessive joy, but that his head was the first to feel its effect. Severe headache was, also, a constant concomitant of any excessive emotion; and this at times has continued for several days in succession. From this circumstance, he was unfitted to battle his way along through the conflicts of the world, with honor or approbation. They called him ugly, and so he was; but grief and sadness always hurried fast upon the heels of his ugliness. The unobserving and unphilosophical could not see through that stolid countenance, to the world of deep emotion within. They might boast of their acquaintance with human nature; but, seen from one stand-point only, (and

few look farther,) it would not reveal every thing that belongs to the individual man. Milton was uncommunicative; his grief was all his own, while his ugliness flashed like a meteor across the pathway of his associates. Had he been better known, more carefully studied and more kindly dealt with, he might have met a different fate. Men who pride themselves in their keen discrimination, are often very ignorant of all the elements that go to make up the varied man. They bring all their judgments to that one phase of humanity, with which, from long association, they happen to be familiar. Few have the ability to insinuate themselves into the temple of the inner man, and read the inscriptions engraved upon the walls of that secret dwelling. They judge from the outward manifestations, and often judge of one from what they have seen in another, and then pretend to understand "human nature!"

It was thus that Milton Streeter was judged—thus he was understood, or rather misunderstood, by those with whom he associated and the community in which he lived. They called him ugly, but who with such a temperament could fail to exhibit such traits of ugliness as might bury the good elements from public view? And yet he was misunderstood, as almost every one is misunderstood, whose passions predominate over his prudence and discretion.

It is a beautiful and romantic tract of country, that lies along the borders of *Quinebaug* river from its source to its termination. Once the red men of the forest roamed along the winding current of that river, and enjoyed their pastimes, or pursued the chase in all the freedom of nature. But their wigwam is now buried in the dust, their tracks are no longer seen, and their song and dance no longer cheer the vales of the *Quinebaug*. The laughing hills no longer send back the echo of their mirth. The tide of a stranger emigration has swept over their homes, and they are gone. Towns and villages have sprung up, as if by enchantment, on the very places consecrated as their ancient abode. The white man treads upon the sacred pre-

cincts where they have sat in social joy or smoked the pipe of peace; and he knows it not. The very memory of them is fast passing away. The rude wigwam has given place to the stately mansion of civilization, and the temple of a thousand wheels—the building all alive with the hum of machinery and of human industry, has grown up majestically, by the river banks, and has drank, and is still drinking up its crystal waters!

The village of Westville is hedged in on all sides by lofty hills. The old cotton mill, standing upon the river's brink is now deserted. Its last operator made a "failure" and has "moved away." The old saw mill still does its work, cutting into board the remnants of mountain pine, that yet remain in the neighborhood. The hammer of the cheery smith rings merrily a little below the old bridge. Farther down is the new "shuttle shop," the abode of industry, genius and thrift. God bless its enterprising proprietors! Still lower down, below that high bluff, around which the river winds, you come to Globe village. There stands its high, square-built dam, that sets the water back for half a mile. On its left bank is the cotton mill; on the right is the saw mill with its long flume, or *aquavia* suspended high in air. Lower down is the large brick woollen mill, the property of the Hamilton Manufacturing Co., "with all the appurtenances thereunto belonging."

Passing along, over that hill, half a mile or more, you reach the Central Village, which, in days of yore received the graphic *sobriquet* of *Honest-town*. For what reason it received this name, does not very clearly appear, unless because the ancient population, addicted to knavery, always wore a countenance of inexpressible honesty. It is true madam Rumor has it, that the early settlers were cut from the same piece with the founders of ancient Rome; and were so accustomed to driving "sharp bargains," that, when they could cheat no one else, they would fall to and cheat one another! And the same fat old lady has further darkly intimated, that long ago they had some mysterious connexion with the notorious Stephen Burroughs, of Pel-



ham preaching memory. The careful reader, however, is admonished not to place too much confidence in the gossip of so equivocal a personage as Mrs. Rumor. Concerning her dark insinuations the Chronicler speaks not. He has not made sufficient investigations of the early history of the place to state them as facts. Many of the first settlers bore the name of Ammidown,—a name honorably interwoven with the history of the place, and borne by some worthy men residing there even at the present time.

As you pass down, you come to the ancient residence of the Marcy family. It is an old mansion, well built, standing at the left, on a round eminence, exposed to the full force of the wintry wind, fresh from the northwest.

There was born the late Secretary of War, who held the position under the administration of President Polk. The name has become distinguished, and so blended with the history of the country, that it will not soon sink into obscurity.

You hurry down that smooth hill to the flat below. It is a beautiful place, redeemed from an ancient mud-hole, by the industry of the public-spirited Honest-towners. That small shoe shop on the right belongs to a very quiet and industrious man, Mr. D. A. Hawks, who has some concernment with the future history of Milton W. Streeter. Nearly opposite is that laughing, joking, good natured steam philosopher, whose *shop* is said to be somewhat *spiritual*, though the *occupant* has not yet fully renounced "the world, the flesh and the devil!" He is a good citizen, of temperate habits, eschewing "mineral medicines," but fond of *mineral waters*, especially those of a bubbling spring in Connecticut.

Farther along there are stores and shops on either side, the abodes of industry and thrift, and the resorts of honorable trade. The merchants in Southbridge, generally stand high in the vocation to which they belong. Whatever madam Rumor may have asserted with reference to the past, it is certain that the present generation, for honorable trade, have redeemed the time, and now stand before the community unsurpassed, in their vocation, in all

that region of country. Their business habits, and fair dealing, have drawn an extensive trade into the two pleasant villages in that town.

On the right hand at the corner of the streets, in full view, stands the public house. You turn to the left and pass down to the bridge, and there, on the right, in its low concealed grandeur, stands the Central Cotton Mill. It is under the conduct of E. Ammidown, Esq., a man distinguished for his ability in the management of business affairs.

The village altogether is pleasant and romantic. The scenery around is charming. Across the river, at the left, is that rugged eminence called Dresser Hill; adown, at the right, the river winds its dreamy waters along through an extensive meadow. It had just broke forth from beneath impending hills. Dark forests stand clothed in their sombre drapery in the distance; and seem, sometimes, to throw back a shade of gloom over the cheerfulness of busy life. The fern and the wild rose grow together in the pastures; the soil teems with the fruits of productive industry, and everything around exhibits the smiles of thrift and of plenty.



### CHAPTER III.

Central Mill—injuries—idle habits—melancholy.

How few, beneath auspicious planets born,  
With swelling sails make good the promised port,  
With all their wishes freighted !

Into this village, came Mr. Asa Streeter with his family in April, 1840, and commenced labor in the Central mill. Milton was then near twenty years old. He had the growth of manhood, with the desire, so common to young men of his age, to be and act for himself. He was, however, docile, and complied, without complaint, with his father's wishes. He went to work, and labored faithfully, as heretofore, until his twentieth birthday. His father then gave him his freedom and permitted him to act for himself. This seemed to form a new era both in his life and his feelings. He thereafter appeared a different man, more impatient of restraint and less disposed to receive the advice even of his parents. The discriminating father soon saw the error that he had committed, but it was too late to retract. It was only by gentle means that he could hope to lead the young man along the path of virtue. This had always served as a most effectual restraint. It was still continued ; and the eccentric young man felt its power and bowed to its influence. He pursued his daily avocation, boarding with his father, as one of the family, and paying something for his board. He persevered in labor and was steady in his habits until the fall of 1841.

At that time, unheeding, as usual, the lessons of accident, he received another severe injury. His hand was caught by the rapid wheels, and drawn suddenly into a carding machine in full motion. The fine teeth of the machine ground rapidly over the entire surface, and tore the skin and flesh from the back of the hand, leaving bare the bones and the tendons, like the skinned toes of a wild

beast ! He was laid up for months, unable to perform his accustomed labor. The recuperative powers of nature, however,—*vis medicatrix naturæ*—at length succeeded in repairing the injury ; and he went back to his work in the mill. He toiled but one day, and as if in the sheerest carelessness, he got his hand again caught in the same way. The machine tore open the old wound and made it worse than at first. Back to the sick room he was again conveyed. His wound was dressed, and every assistance rendered the efforts of nature for a second recovery. A long and tedious time elapsed before it was effected. Many said the deed was committed on purpose, that he might have a decent excuse to get rid of toil. They greatly mistook the man. He hated labor deeply, thoroughly, and would get rid of it, if he could. But he was incapable of acting with such a determined purpose of self-immolation. It was the result of that unstudied impetuosity that had long governed his life. He was always subject to periods when he would appear strange—when he acted, as if by impulse, unheeding results. Little things afflicted him deeply, but the depth of his feeling lay congealed from the glance of the careless observer. A wildness glared in his eye, and he seemed in a great hurry, as if the whole business of the world rested upon his own shoulders, with but a moment's time to do it. But with all his hurry he seldom brought anything to pass.

Amid every scene of excitement, there was, also, that perpetual melancholy, and perpetual round of headache. It made him fretful and peevish ; dark thoughts gathered over his mind, the harbingers of a stormy life. He imagined that the whole world was against him, and a deeper feeling now began to steal over him. He had no wish to live, for life was becoming a burden.

While prevented from labor, by the injury of his hand, he lounged about the town in idleness. He had no taste for reading or intellectual culture, for he had but a small share of intellect to cultivate. Men are united by the sympathies of kindred habits, tastes and feelings. Milton loved the society of Ben Irish, a man of some more in-

telleet and discretion, but otherwise formed in the same mould. There were two others, young men, with whom he had formed an acquaintance by the name of Reynolds,—Marvin and Edwin. They all loved amusements; and nothing seemed more detestable to them than steady and persevering labor. They would traverse the forest for weeks together, to shoot a poor harmless bird; but had little relish for that kind of physical exertion which is really useful. Seldom did they go forth to the forest chase without some sort of *spirituous* aid. There were others too, in higher stations in the town, not specially holy, who nevertheless often invoked the aid of a kindred spirit! If there was any idleness, or lounging, vulgarly called *loafing* to be done, you might see a scudding smile of unutterable unction playing upon the countenance of Henry Barber, while engaged in its performance.

Yet Henry is very good—very tender hearted—sometimes very mellow, and very kind to the gentler sex. He had a brother, son of the same mother, and transcript of the same father; but death took suddenly hold of him in a fit of intoxication. He was then given to the scalpel for a *post mortem* examination, and at length buried, a warning to every worshiper at the shrine of Bacchus.

These were all men of some good traits of character. They were not without feelings. Nay, warm attachments and deep emotions burned in their bosoms. Do not condemn them as totally depraved—altogether evil. They had their friends and associates, their companions and bosom crones; but they belonged to a world and received enjoyments peculiarly their own. And he who cannot enter into their world and observe the sources of their pleasure, whose heart beats not in unison with their sympathies, may not pass judgment against them. He is unqualified to do so. However much he may boast of his knowledge of human nature, he knows not the secrets of their nature; he looks not into the mysteries of their world. He looks down upon them, from another sphere, and the glimpses he may catch of their outward life, does not reveal to him all the lights and shadows of the world within.

These were the fit associates of Milton W. Streeter. Their minds were accordant with his own. He loved their habits, and sought their society ; and often, with them, he traversed the tangled forests, as they went forth on their excursions of pleasure. Henry Barber, however, had but little inclination for such sports ; they were too great a tax upon his physical energies. He was not obstinate nor parsimonious ; he was not disposed to resist the claims of the State upon his person or his substance for the support of its institutions. You might take his money, if he had any, or his old hat, or even his unmentionables, and he would submit quietly. But when you asked him for work—when you called on him for physical exertion, he shook his head ; it was a kind of taxation to which he was unwilling to submit.

Milton had now been out of the mill for a year or more, and he concluded not to return again to that employment. Accordingly he engaged himself to Mr. E. Ammidown, to work at farming ; and he pursued that labor quite steadily until the expiration of his engagement. Yet in this avocation, he was not left to an undisturbed repose of mind. He was subject, as heretofore, to the vexatious merriment of those laboring with him ; and he exhibited his usual irritability of temper. He could not bear to be teased, or joked at all ; and his companions knew it. Everything said in jest, he would take in sober earnest, and was often exceedingly offended. George Dillaber was another of the same fraternity—of similar tastes and a very suitable compeer for Milton Streeter. He was more gentle in disposition, and of a much higher order of intellect, but of a turn of mind to relish the same class of pleasures. Profanity and vulgar jests furnished a source of high enjoyment to this class. In these, however, Milton could not so well participate. He was profane and vulgar enough ; but he had no power to shape his vulgarity into jokes. He could neither give or take them with any grace. Ben Irish, however, was keen ; he loved the sport as he loved his dinner, especially when the shafts were not aimed too hard against himself.



One day while this trio of kindred spirits were at work for Mr. Ammidown, getting in hay, they began, unconsciously, to lighten labor by an interchange of raillery. Their jokes played with a dull monotony around the head of Milton. His anger was at length aroused to the point of explosion, and, seizing a pitchfork, he turned violently towards Dillaber, and threatened to "run him through!" Irish interfered; but Dillaber, with the bravado peculiar to his cast, resisted the interference, and asserted his ability to "handle Streeter," at any time, without assistance. This speck of a tempest was followed by a copious shower of profanity, and then it cleared off and quiet was restored.

Afterwards for some trifling cause, Streeter made the same threat against Ben Irish. But no one present regarded it as anything more than a mere threat. It was the common language of the class to which he belonged, in the sudden bursts of passion which frequently crossed the sunshine of their path.

Concluding his labors with Mr. Ammidown, he was again thrown upon his oars. In this condition he continued for a while, and then, changing his purpose, he determined to try his fortune again in the mill. He obtained a place, and continued in that employment until the Spring of 1844. Then he became unsteady and off again.

From this time forth he ceased to confine himself to any steady employment. Much of his time was spent either in idleness, or what is worse, in useless and even vicious pursuits. His attachment\* to the two young brothers—E. and M. Reynolds—increased; he sought their society and seemed in their presence to be relieved of his melancholy. Benjamin Irish, also was for him, a very crone—the life of his life and the soul of his soul, only he could not always stand the shafts, and, of course, rebelled against the brilliant gems of Benjamin's wit! His friendships, however, were of short duration, and subject to continual change. He was too easily excited, and too violent in his wrath, to have any warm and permanent friends. His singularities



grew upon him ; his passions became every day more uncontrollable ; a deeper tinge of melancholy was settling down upon his inward life, and every year brought forth some new exhibition of that headlong impetuosity, which characterized every period of his history. This was now increased by the impulse of melancholy, the excitement of headache, the impression that the world was against him, the half-bred misanthropy produced by that impression, and the gathering aversion to life itself.

From March until July, he gave himself up to lounging and idleness. Then he went to Webster, and worked awhile for his uncle, a Mr. Brown. A few weeks brought him home again ; but he soon after went to Dudley, and engaged himself to a Mr. Rogers, to learn the " art and mystery " of making shoes. His experience, in that business was very short ; six or eight weeks were sufficient confinement for his restless spirit. His whole mind was like the troubled ocean,—not from crime or from want, but from the agitations of a temperament overwhelmed with conflicting emotions. He was away from his boon companions. The life of a hunter, so much his delight, could not be enjoyed in other pursuits. Of consequence he left his shoemaking and again spent a short time with his uncle in Webster.

The autumnal frosts had begun to change the hue of vegetation ; his summer had passed away without profit, and now he was borne home sick to his father's house. He was seized with a fever which, for a time, raged with great violence. Delirium had locked up his senses in a night of profound oblivion. To him was that space of existence all lost ; and it had been better, perhaps, if he had lost even a longer space of his life. His fever at length abated, but recovery was slow, and the results, upon his nervous organization, were very perceptible. His head, as usual, was greatly affected ; the pain was severe, and the petulance and irritability in no wise diminished.

No severe pain can be long and constantly suffered, without producing a marked effect upon the moral nature. Danger and suffering are the two instrumentalities most

calculated to imbrute humanity. The best disposition, the most even balanced mind, is often soured and rendered fretful, and morose, and even brutal, by constant suffering. The mass of people are not disposed to make allowance for the violence of temper produced by suffering, and suffering, too, which they themselves may have inflicted. You cannot tease and torment a dog or a horse continually, without making the animal vicious. The same effect is produced upon every other animal by the same causes. Can a man, then, especially of a low order of intellect, be expected to suffer constant pain without receiving some injurious effects?

Milton Streeter, subject as he was, to pain and sadness, was not the man to be mended, in his disposition, by the exercise of severity. After his recovery, he was less disposed than ever, to ply his mind and body to any consecutive labor. If he worked at all, it was only at brief and uncertain periods, as the fit happened to take him.

You see that low, modest tasteful brick building on the right hand side of the street as you pass from the Central Village in Southbridge toward the Columbian. It is the Bank. Standing a little back, by the side of that large barn, is a long, low, narrow building that has an ominous appearance. You may hear, sometimes late at night, a deep rumbling and crackling like distant thunder. It is a nine-pin alley—a place of resort for several different classes, that form a part of the country's population. Such a place of amusement may be useful to some persons of enfeebled powers, who need exercise and have nothing else to do. But it is not, after all, a very frequented resort of those great and good men, useful and influential in their day, who, when they have passed from the stage of action, leave behind the marks of themselves imprinted upon the whole face of the community. It is the more common rendezvous of the idle and frivolous, the vile and thoughtless, who make up, in useless amusements, what they lack in generous thought and noble deed. There, too, gather the vicious, gamblers and rowdies, who aim to draw a livelihood out of society without contributing their

share to the general wealth. These hang around it like carrion birds around a recent battle field ; and give it all its importance and all its glory.

Milton Streeter was often in that nine-pin alley. From the time of his recovery until the next Spring, he might be seen hovering around it, setting up pins for others to knock down. He received occasionally a few coppers, and, sometimes, a sip of grog for his valuable services. And from these circumstances, he at length became greatly absorbed in the vocation. But time rolled rapidly away, and he found it would leave him penniless, shirtless and shoeless, unless he put forth some effort for a subsistence.

The Spring of 1845 came, glorious with its warm and blazing sun. It called even the dormant powers of Milton W. Streeter into unwonted activity. He was variously employed by different individuals through several months, generally, however, in the open air. The fresh breeze was conducive to health and the elasticity of his spirits. He was free from that headache and melancholy that pressed so heavily on his life. But still he hung around the nine-pin alley, that resort of the idle, like a dark voracious bird, screeching, with an ominous utterance, for its carrion food. There he joined in the nightly orgies, and his voice of revel rose with the rest, in heavy inharmonious barytones, like the low gutturals of a Bedouin Arab. His voice was never musical. It had none of that pleasant resonance which, even in double bass, falls with delightful sweetness upon the ear. It was gruff, and monotonous, and stood out from all other known sounds : and yet its vibrations were music to him. He loved the rough chiming of similar voices ; and it was a chorus of such, rendered more unearthly by some *spirituous* influence, that formed the common music of that nine-pin alley, and often broke the stillness of the midnight air. Milton was frequently among these revellers, but still he performed some labor.

At the intercession of his friends, he concluded, once more, to try his fortune in the Central cotton mill. It was a matter of policy, on the part of his father, who had paid

some debts of his contracting. Engaged in the mill, he would be less exposed to evil influence, and be likely to earn something to satisfy his creditors, or remunerate his father for the outlays made in his behalf. But somehow the fates seemed always against him. He seldom had difficulty with his employers, or their authorized agents; but he sometimes came in conflict with his companions in toil. The most frequent cause of such collision was their injudicious raillery. He could not bear it; nothing would offend him sooner, or arouse his mind with more frantic rage. This infirmity was well known to all, yet they loved the sport, and would, therefore, let slip their jests. The effect on him was fearful. They had not sufficient discrimination to perceive it, nor sufficient philosophy, or philanthropy, to desist, even if they had seen it.

With feelings soured from this and other causes, he became again a laborer in the mill. A fair-haired young man of mild temperament, but quick and rash in his resentments, toiled near him. They were mutual friends; but Reuben Eastman was too young always to be discreet. Age and experience would have given a graver character to his movements. He obtained clandestinely a "dripping pan" belonging to the machine on which Streeter worked, and which was constantly required for service. Milton charged him with the trick, and demanded a return of the article. He denied the charge and uttered the rapid challenge, You lie, G—d d——in you! Streeter was inflamed with wrath, and blows followed, accompanied with a storm of profanity. At length young Eastman received from Streeter a severe kick in the abdomen which put him *hors de combat*, and thus the *melee* ended.

The *fight* was ended, but not so with the *leave-off*. Eastman was disabled for a day or two, and, in the meantime, his friends, fearing the worst, were aroused with violent indignation. The matter grew with astonishing celerity. In less than twenty-four hours, it had become equal in size to Jonah's gourd; but was far more rank and threatening in its appearance. A warrant, re-



fused by the village authorities, was obtained from an attorney in an adjoining town. Streeter was arrested and brought before the magistrate for trial. But through the influence of E. Ammidown Esq., Hon Linus Childs, who was then a resident of the town, and some others, the whole affair was finally adjusted, on the payment of five dollars and the costs of prosecution. The father of Streeter came forward to his aid, paid the amount, and thus the difficulty was settled.

Nevertheless it exerted a powerful influence upon the disordered mind of Milton W. Streeter. He was growing more and more a misanthropist every day of his life. The impression that the world was all against him, which had been preying, like a canker worm, upon his mind, was deepening every day, and ripening into indignant hate. His chief companions were the young Reynolds, and Ben Irish. The affair with Eastman had thrown him again out of employment, and left him an idler, to consort with the idle and dissolute in the place. With his crone companions, he again united, and idled away his time in roaming the forests, or loitering about the haunts of dissipation. He became more improvident than ever, spending what money he could get, and even incurring debts for others to pay. His debts were a source of trouble and vexation, both to himself and his father; for when hard pressed, his father would sometimes voluntarily settle them, on the condition that he would work and refund the amount. At such times, Milton exhibited real penitence, and promises were freely given; but they were light as the wind, and broken almost as soon as made.

The winter was spent in idleness, and the Summer of 1846 appeared in its glory; but its opening prospects were dark and unpropitious, to the unfortunate young man.

Hannah Streeter, the eldest sister of Milton, was a fair-haired, fine appearing, and kind hearted young girl. She had been his companion from childhood; and, gentle, gay, sportive, affable and full of smiles, she had won his affections, and he loved her with the wildness of his



usual emotions. There was a charm about her young life that soothed his soul, and seemed, at intervals, to give him some snatches of a purer state. He felt the influence of that outward power, which had awakened such emotions in his own heart. In March of this year, Hannah was married to a young man named Joseph L. Janes.\* How far this circumstance influenced his subsequent life, no one can tell. His attachment to his sister was, in a measure, conferred upon her husband also. And no one, among all his relations, his father perhaps excepted, had more influence over him than Mr. Janes. But Hannah was married, and the intimate connexion of "a brother and a sister" were, in some degree, cut off. Milton was left more desolate than ever.

He employed himself, somewhat, as a day laborer, working chiefly at farming; but his time was much spent in the nine-pin alley. For about two months, he took charge of it, as a sub-officer under Mr. Nelson, who had rented the establishment. He seemed pressed, however, ever and anon, with a more settled melancholy. He was uncommunicative, choosing to be much alone, and often withdrew to some unfrequented spot, and remained there in solitude for hours together. Advice, counsel and entreaty, given in the kindest manner, enraged him, and sometimes called forth paroxysms of great violence. In all these scenes, there was an uncommon lustre in his eyes—a wildness in his whole aspect, the import of which a careful observer could not fail to apprehend. Unfortunately his associates were too little observing, and, in common with more intelligent minds, they misunderstood the man. He exhibited occasional fits of violence toward his mother, so much that she was afraid to be left alone in the house with him.

The summer and autumn wasted away, and the ill fated young man, bound as by the charm of a serpent to his few crone companions, still hovered, darkling and deso-

\*The Court record spells the name Gaines; but the pronunciation is as spelled above, and so Mr. Janes writes his name.

late around that perpetual nine-pin alley. There, amidst the sneers and jests of its rude worshipers, he could catch a few glimpses of pleasure, which seemed to flash, in lurid gleams, across the stormy waters of his inner life. So passed the events of his history. Another year had gone to join its predecessors in the past; Milton Streeter lived in the world, but he seemed to belong to another race of beings. His beloved sister and her husband had removed from the town, and the last link in the chain of restraining affection seemed to have passed from his mind, and he stood alone. His parents remained, and fear, or reverence of his father, might subdue him; but the tender affection which enchained his soul was gone.

His avocation in the factory threw him much into the society of females, and of a class, too, calculated to attract his attention and even to win his heart. Factory operatives, spurned as they may be, are far from being destitute of real worth or personal attractions. Some of the finest specimens of female beauty, which this country affords, may be seen, gliding with elfish grace, around the busy machinery of a cotton mill. There is the dark eye with its speaking lustre,—the ruddy cheek rivaling the rose in its bloom; and there, too, that witchery of expression, which no pen can describe—that half concealed waggish smile, playing in flashes beneath a veil of thoughtfulness, that rests in quiet benignity over the whole countenance. What with the graces of woman, and wonderful movements of the machinery, a cotton mill, in one aspect at least, appears like a fairy land! Yet the charms of such a place, the attractions of such a class, the vivacity, and angelic kindness embodied there, failed to interest the dull heart of Milton W. Streeter. It may be that the cause was in himself. His own appearance, his sudden passions, his rash impetuosity, and his reputed ugliness, may have repulsed those very attractions that would otherwise have won his heart.

He was not now, however, among them. He had left the mill, and was out of the reach of the influence of their charms. His business, what little he had, threw him into

another class of community rough, vulgar, profane, wanting intellect, and destitute of the graces of refined society. His joys were among this class ; in person, he was with them much, yet, in mind, he was isolated. He was not insensible to the charms of woman ; and still he stood alone. The whole world misunderstood him. Even his name stood out, in the common mind, as the representative of the ugliness and repulsive characteristics presented to the outward observer. Farther than that, he had not been studied ; the profounder elements of his nature had not been investigated ; and few comprehended the characteristics of his inner life. Of course he had but little sympathy from the world ; but little friendship was felt for him, and but little charity exercised even by his most constant companions. The hoarse oaths, ribald curses, and perhaps threats and blows, took the place of kind words and gentle treatment. And here we will leave him for a few weeks, the sport of a most singular destiny.

## CHAPTER IV.

Elvira W. Houghton—her personal appearance at the age of sixteen—residence—habits—learns the trade of dress-maker. She goes to Central Village, Southbridge—her admirers.

“ They depart,  
Light after light our glorious visions fade.”

In the northern part of the town of Woodstock, Conn., bordering upon the line between that State and Massachusetts, stands, by the roadside, a very neat looking farm house, somewhat worse for years, but having the appearance of comfort and convenience. The country around is picturesque and delightful. No high mountains or deep valleys, but gentle undulations, broken into ridges with precipitous rocks, and here and there ponds of a dark hue, imbedded like diamonds in the surrounding hills, form some of its distinguishing features. The soil is productive, the slopes and ridges are covered, in Summer, with green grass, and waving grain, or with beautiful forests of a young and thrifty growth. That farm house, on which time had imprinted its shrivelled fingers, stands in a secluded spot,—a companion indeed of a few other buildings situated near it, but retired from the confusion and turmoil of more populous places.

The weeds grow rank in the unfrequented streets on which it stands. The dilapidated fences along the roadside serve, but poorly, as a defence of the adjoining field, against the depredation of geese running unyoked in the highway. Yet they answered as an apology for better defences. The domestic fowls ran unrestrained over the meadows and the pastures, occasionally dipping their unquiet toes into forbidden places of the cornfield or garden. The quiet sheep are nipping the sweet grass, on the hill-side, out there in the pastures. Every thing around bears the impress of quietness. There is not much energy, either



mental or physical, in the management of the farm. The land is cultivated, and the occupant lives, but not with much evidence of thrift or of enterprise.

Some ten or a dozen years ago, there might be seen a young girl of sixteen, laughing and leaping in the freshness of youth, around that quiet home. She gave life and energy to all around ; there was more order there,—more economy, more enterprise, and industry, in the management of that farm, than at a subsequent period. She was fair,—nay, beautiful in the bloom of her girlhood. Her dark hazle eye had little of that flashing lustre denoting quick perception combined with a haughty and unloving heart. It was mild, tender and expressive of deep feeling and ardent attachment. Her features were regular, her cheeks fresh, and her dark hair fell down in graceful ringlets upon a neck of alabaster whiteness. Her dress was coarse, but tidy, and fitted for the station she occupied. It contrasted finely with her fair and interesting features. The very contrast set off every grace and every charm to the best advantage. Little do young girls think how much more interesting and lovely they appear, when arrayed occasionally in a coarser dress and with cheeks freshened by some active toil ! Let no one despise labor ;—for labor and fresh air are the most effective beautifiers—the best cosmetics which ladies can use.

It was Miss Elvira Walker Houghton, that lived, with her parents, in that retired mansion, and conned her first thoughts, and formed her first associations, among the flowers and green trees, the meadows and pastures of that quiet farm. And like girls usually, who are brought up on a farm, she was not only healthy and handsome, but innocent and light-hearted, as the birds of early spring. It is the irregularities of fashionable life, the contaminating touch of the world, and the wasting influence of factory labor, that robs them of their charms, and sometimes of their virtue also.

That young girl, so innocent and so gay, was not destined to spend her life in this sequestered spot. Happy for her if she could have done so !—happy if, in early life



she could have united her destiny with a worthy young man, and settled down in some secluded home like that of her childhood. But mysterious are the ways of Providence. We cannot see the end from the beginning ! Her parents were not wealthy ; and, of course, it became necessary that she should devote herself to some productive labor, at least, for her own support, if nothing more. She chose to learn a " trade "—that of a dressmaker ; and after devoting to it a few months' labor, she became well instructed in the art and mystery thereof ; and then went out to take her chances in the rude unsympathizing world.

The residence of her father, is between four and five miles from the Central village in Southbridge. The road leading to it is uneven, circuitous, and somewhat romantic. From the Central village, you take the road south, follow the left hand, pass that little mill about two miles out, and then ascend that heavy hill. You see that large white house nearly at the top, with barns of ample dimension around it. It is the residence of that jolly specimen of fat humanity—Parker Morse, Esq. Unlike the race of fat men generally, he is far from being lazy. His large farm shows ample evidence of an industry that has been pursued for years ; and of a thrift, also, which is, at the same time, the result, and the reward of that industry. Every thing around his house, and all its " appurtenances " is tidy, and bears the marks of neatness. Every thing within is equally neat. He loves order. He loves also a good honest joke. He loves industry, and attends closely to his domestic affairs. He carries his surplus produce to market himself, delights in the sound of music and dance, does his own praying and minds his own business ! Would that the whole world were as free from sin as he.

But do not stop too long moralizing over that fat old gentleman with jolly face and half closed eye. Pass on over the hill, and wind along the public highway ; you will come at length to the youthful home, where that dark haired maiden reveled in the gayety of youth. She was early transplanted from her paternal roof to the Central village, where she was destined to meet her horrible fate !

Here she plied her busy fingers with the needle. For neatness, accuracy and despatch, she was excelled by few in her vocation. She mingled with the gay ; she laughed merrily ; her young heart joined in the song of innocent mirth ; and she loved to thread the mazy dance with her young companions. Her friends and associates were not of a low order. She found them among the most respectable citizens of the place. She was pretty, sprightly in conversation for awhile, and by many admired. But unfortunately she was not proof against the arts and the wiles of flattery. She "loved the praise of men !" Frequently reminded of her fine features, she became daily more convinced of the perfections of her charms, and her face seemed to her all the fairer, every time she consulted her mirror. Her form and features were really fine, her dress was always tastefully arranged, and her whole demeanor, at first view, was dignified and not without its charms.

But her intercourse with the world was unfavorable. She had not strength of mind to bear her exaltation. It required no uncommon discrimination to see, in her mind, the workings of unbounded vanity ; and that fault, as in almost all other cases, was accompanied with deficiency of intellect. Here, doubtless, was the cause of her ruin. Female beauty always has its admirers. But it can command no permanent admiration, or respect, or affection, except when combined with a good heart and a cultivated intellect. The young Elvira lacked at least one thing—namely, a power of discrimination. She was incapable of distinguishing between the favors of sycophancy and the true awards of merit. She was liable to deception in every form. She listened to her own praises with too much relish to avoid it. She had her admirers, but they passed away, like the morning dew. A brief hour of social intercourse was often sufficient to change their admiration and awaken indifference, if not actual disgust. Her love of flattery increased greatly with the very food it fed upon.

If among all her admirers, she had any suitors, they bore

usually that interesting relationship, but a very short time. She did indeed receive the addresses of one young man—a very worthy man—for a year or more; but suddenly these were discontinued, and no one but themselves knew why.

Time passed on, and she fluttered in her tinsel beauty, still verging, nearer and more near, to that delicate and dreaded period, when, having out-maidened all her early associates, she would remain alone a withered remnant of the past, and the sport of the rising generation. To her over-weening vanity, she might have added another fault of a deeper and darker shade, which, now that she sleeps a murdered victim in the narrow house, it is not proper to unveil.

She left the place of her residence, for a while, and sought another theatre of industry. The reasons which induced this procedure are not fully developed. She spent some time in Springfield; but, not succeeding to her satisfaction, she returned again to Southbridge, which she had now so long considered her home. She renewed her past avocations, and readily found employment among her old friends and patrons. They received her with cordiality and bestowed their usual attentions. She loved the society of her own sex; but still more to be noticed, cherished, admired and flattered by the other sex. And this feeling grew upon her even faster than age. It was a valuable treasure to her, to have a respectable young man invite her to attend a ball, and join with her in the "giddy dance." It was not indeed worth half as much as the hope of heaven itself; but she would speak of such an honor, with a calm gratification, which fully evinced the value she set upon it! Might it not lead to a relationship more dear and interesting? That such thoughts constantly obtruded themselves upon her mind, few acquainted with her can doubt.

Yet she was choice of the company she kept. The lower grades of young men, and especially those of coarse attire and uncouth manners, were not her favorites. She was not attracted, even by real worth, if it happened to be

concealed under some coarse, rough-looking garment, adapted to the business of its wearer. As she delighted herself to flit around in gay attire, bedecked with spangles and frills, and gorgeous ornaments of every kind, so she was pleased with the attentions of young men well dressed, and sought the society of such in preference to any others.

In this glow of her young heart, she would have looked upon Milton Streeter as beneath her attention. To be called Mrs. Streeter, would have grated harshly upon her ears. The very thought of marrying him, would have thrown her delicate sensibilities into a paroxysm of nervous tremors; and would have called out one of those simpering exclamations for which she was particularly distinguished! But no one can unroll the scroll of destiny, and read beforehand the vicissitudes of fortune. No one can foresee the changes, from high to low, to which humanity is subject in its "journey of life." The buoyant young heart might shrink from its destiny, if that destiny were revealed to it in early years. The very aspiration of the soul after greatness, so just in itself, too often begets a contempt for meaner things. Withering age, a change of circumstances, and impassioned importunities will, sometimes, work wonders on the heart of a young female, bringing down the spirit from its lofty flight, to an atmosphere of more sober and chastened reality. How mellow had become the heart of Miss Elvira W. Houghton, and how much it had been softened by the arrows of Cupid it were impossible to tell.

But whatever might have been her vanity—whatever her love of dress, however weak her intellect, or frail her virtue, she was really kind-hearted, generous, ardent in her attachment to friends, and though, perhaps, occasionally petulant, yet on the whole she was gentle and inoffensive. If she was at any time disturbed in her temper, it was oftener from a love of display and an anxiety to appear well in company, than from any inherent *meanness*—maliciousness or turpitude of disposition.

Time, however, is rapid in its marches, and never stops



for man or maid. The sun and the moon did indeed stand still at the command of a warrior chief of Israel, that his marshalled hosts might bathe the sword in the blood of the Amorites. But they never have been known to stop in their rapid course to preserve the maiden's face from the wrinkles gathering upon it by the hand of time. Virtue and good habits constitute the surest safeguard against the deflorations of age. The light hearted Elvira, by some girlish mischance, might, like the fading rose, have come prematurely to wear the blight of older years. Judge her not severely; many a young Miss has committed indiscretions, or suffered from the extravagant demands of fashion. *Suspicion*, without crime, is often sufficient to blast the character of woman. The fame and fortune of Elvira were, in later life, settling down to a lower level. Her name became connected with the idle joke, not so much for vice, as for foolish vanity. Indeed, her friends generally had full confidence in her virtue and honesty of purpose.



## CHAPTER V.

Streeter's first acquaintance with Miss Houghton—the remarkable circumstances which led to it—he becomes Miss H's suitor—his proposal of marriage—Miss H. accepts it with hesitation—Miss H. regrets her rash vow—Streeter urges his suit, and is again accepted—the nuptial day set—Miss H. again rejects Streeter, on the day of their marriage—Streeter's entreaties—Miss H's father intercedes with her in Streeter's behalf—Miss H. consents—Streeter's marriage.

Away! vain mockery of a bridal wreath!

In this condition of mind and of character, the ill-fated girl reached the summer of 1847. Every prospect of marriage had slipped, like so many tantalizing spirits, one after another from her presence. And each, in turn, had left her more lonely and desolate, and widowed in her tender thoughts than ever. She still retained her attachment to the place. Its scenery was delightful, and the memory of former friendships was pleasant. She loved, indeed, the old farm house, where she had spent her earlier years. She loved her parents, and it was very pleasant occasionally to visit the paternal home. But she clung, still more, to the place where she had spent so many happy years; and, though the scene had changed, she still loved to look upon the beautiful outline, and watch the picture as it faded from her view. There were sad things, however, even in the paternal home, which might have added to the bitterness of her reflections, and made her feel still more the loneliness of her situation. Her mother—the light of that mother's mind, had long been obscured; and what unhappy events occurred with reference to her may be left unrecorded. She had not been able to give comfort and solace to the daughter; and other circumstances, connected with the household of her father, must have exerted a painful influence on the delicate sensibilities of Elvira.

At this time, however, an event occurred, destined, by a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, to work a change in the whole course of her life. Her mother, who, deprived of reason, had long been deprived of the power of discharging the duties of a mother, sickened and died. Elvira was sent for, to attend the funeral. Having no means of conveyance herself, a carriage was provided to convey her to the paternal abode. It was a sad time for the broken-hearted girl. She loved her mother. She wept when her mother departed to the unseen world. Painful as had been the spell which had enchained her mother's mind, and deprived Elvira of a mother's counsel she was still anxious to be present and join in the solemnities of the funeral occasion. The owner of the carriage was required to send a man to take charge of the sorrowing girl, and return with the carriage, leaving her at her father's house. Those in his employ were all engaged in other matters connected with his business, and could not go. By one of those singular fortuitous events, incident to human life, Milton Streeter happened to be near, lounging about, in one of his idlest and most melancholy moods. Solicited to take the place of driver, and convey Elvira to her destination, he gladly accepted. He had nothing else to do; and the novelty of the occurrence might relieve him from the weight of sadness then pressing upon his mind. Accordingly he seated himself by the side of the mourning maid, himself the most melancholy of the two. It was early summer, (the exact date is not ascertained.) The trees were green, the meadows verdant, the breezes fresh and exhilarating, and the domestic animals traversed the pastures contented and happy. It was a season too, when men might have been happy. Doubtless many people were so—others were not. A thousand causes of discontent operate on many minds to prevent enjoyment.

Milton and the maid by his side were among the unhappy. They started off together. Silence had thrown its sombre shadows over them, and so they passed on. But soon that silence was broken;—with what mysterious words, or

what proffered and reciprocated affection, no one can tell. They continued their course. Sorrow had given a mellow sweetness to the voice of Elvira. Its tones fell delightfully upon the ears of the listener. The interest increased, until a mysterious power had thrown its chains around the heart of the charmed young man, and laid him a captive at the shrine of love.

This was a new feeling. The curtain had been drawn aside and let him into new secrets in the unwritten history of human nature. Hitherto, he had felt a brotherly attachment to his beloved sister Hannah; but Hannah was now gone, and the pent up emotions of a lone heart sought for some object on which to pour themselves in their outflowing. The first impressions are often the deepest and most lasting. Milton loved. He had never before felt that emotion for womankind. It was a new life. He had entered, as it were, a drawing room, out of the dull monotony of a *loufer's* existence. Nay, more; he had entered, perhaps unbidden, into the private parlor of tender affection. And there he stood, like a clown in a king's palace, amazed and enraptured at the wonders disclosed. He loved; but it was with the same sudden and wild impetuosity which he exhibited in all his emotions! His love was ardent, vehement, and sought wildly the possession of its object. What words passed between him and the mourning Elvira, cannot now be recorded. Whether it were the sorrowing tones that fell from her soft voice, lamenting the death of her mother, or whether a propitious spirit hovering in air had impressed upon the mind an emotion never before felt; it is certain that he was caught—blissfully, but irretrievably captivated, and resistance was vain!

The funeral ceremonies passed off, and Milton returned home alone. He waited anxiously for the return of Elvira, and eagerly sought her society. He soon became her suitor, and his addresses were received, not without hesitation, and dread, and reluctance, on the part of the doubting girl. The horoscope was unfavorable. The events of their acquaintance were ominous of evil. And it was sad, too, to think she had fallen so low. But her

own desolate condition, the anxieties that had governed her life, and the entreaties of Milton, at length prevailed. She smiled favorably, and blessed the few first interviews of the lovers' life.

Thus commenced, he urged his suit with all the ardor and impetuosity of his own feelings. He could ill brook delays. His life was often inter-streaked with hurry and bustle, which seldom, however, accomplished much. But in this case he persevered. It was his first affair of love, and the impression was more permanent. In a few weeks he had proffered his heart and his hand to the yielding fair one. She hesitated; sadness came over her afresh. The future was portentous. It was Milton Streeter, who had made the proposal—Milton, whose name had been bandied, like a foot ball, among the village jesters! But at length she consented. It required a great moral effort, but still she consented to take him "for better or worse," through their journey of life; and preparations were made to consummate the tender vows. Days flew by and events were ripening for the result. Meantime the reluctant girl repented of her rash assent, and, with an instability for which she had been distinguished, retracted her hasty promise. Their acquaintance had been too short. The promise had followed too closely after the bliss of wooing. She wished for time to reflect. But this was a terrible stroke to her impassioned innamorato. He was overwhelmed with grief. It was a stroke which he had little expected, and his impetuosity was aroused to the highest point. He again sought out the maid of his love. She retreated before him, like the timid deer. But, with a voice rendered eloquent by despair, he breathed his tender love into her listening ear. He prevailed; she again consented to be his own, and the nuptial day was appointed.

That day arrived. Milton repaired to the paternal home of his plighted fair one. It was all done in haste. There he found his beloved Elvira, trembling and pale, awaiting his coming, and yet dreading his approach. Both had made some slight preparation. Things were now ready; friends had gathered there to witness the ceremony; the



company was arranged, and the parson had seated himself in their midst.

But poor Elvira saw all these arrangements with a bursting heart. A fate awaited her;—an undefinable presage of evil weighed upon her spirit. She shrunk from the encounter, anxious to avoid the fearful results. Milton saw her reluctance, and spoke soothingly, but tears were the only reply: and these but too plainly rejected his suit. She had promised, indeed, but how could she perform? Again aroused with impetuous love he persisted. He urged his suit with redoubled vehemence, and with an eloquence which love alone can inspire. Despair sat upon his countenance, and that unmeaning expression which had so long rested upon it, was now completely absorbed in the wild delirium of his emotion. He even threatened—as she herself afterwards stated—to commit suicide unless she yielded to his wishes. Here was a strong testimony of his affection. He had no thought of injuring, even a hair of her sweet head. But melancholy weighed so heavily upon him, that he would rather die than live without her.

The father, also, of the reluctant girl interceded, and anxiously exerted his own persuasive power to gain her consent. Dark suspicions have, doubtless unjustly, intimated that her condition, through other instrumentalities than Milton Streeter, demanded her immediate entrance upon the marriage relations. These, however, should be treated as a mere idle rumor.

Persuasions from all quarters at length prevailed. She again consented; and, standing pale and trembling amidst the nuptial party, she was duly and lawfully immolated,—the faded fair one became Mrs. Streeter.

But sad was the effect upon the heart of the frail maiden. She wept aloud. The bridal evening was made a scene of sadness. Even the grave clergyman sympathized; and the whole assembly was moved with the singular spectacle. It resembled more the solemnities of a funeral than the bliss of a bridal day. It was a scene portentous of a fearful fate. Calmed at length, she



seemed to prepare her mind for her new relation, and gather the energies of her soul for the conflict of coming events.

Thus passed away the 16th day of August 1847, when Milton W. Streeter and Elvira W. Houghton, were lawfully married—"made one!" The prize had been gained, it was borne away, and Milton was happy. He was linked to the world by a new relation; and he commenced its toils and duties again, with a better purpose, and a higher confidence of success. And had he removed immediately from the place and entered upon some honorable employment, where both he and his wife were comparatively unknown, he might have met with a better fate. But the ways of Providence are past our comprehension.

## CHAPTER VI.

Curious remarks upon Streeter's marriage, by certain individuals in his neighborhood—Mrs. Streeter's fondness for attending balls—her husband's opposition—his jealousy of H. Beacon—his threats and bad treatment of his wife—unhappy discovery—married life.

“Quand l'homme commence a raisonner, il cesse de sentir”

The news of the marriage soon spread in the village, and became a subject of common remark, in some of the gossiping circles in that strange place.

“Mrs. Prindle, I have got some news to tell you—the greatest that you have heard for a long time.”

“You don't say so. What is it?”

“Milton Streeter is married!”

“Milton Streeter! well, there! who upon airth could he find to have him?”

“You can't guess!”

“Oh!—ah!—there, that's just like you! Who is it? I didn't know as there was any body, in all creation, fool enough to marry Milton Streeter! Who did he find?”

“Elvira Houghton.”

“Well there! if that don't beat! Who would have thought it? But I always knew she was a simple girl; it might be just like her.”

Both parties agreed it was very singular that Elvira Houghton should have lowered herself so much as to marry Milton Streeter. And this seemed to be the common impression in the place. It was a matter of wonder and surprise to many, if not to all, and yet there was not so much difference in the compass of their minds, as the expression might seem to indicate—not so much even in their respective measure of moral worth. But, on other points, there were differences, great and perplexing; and from these sprang, in a measure, the storms of their married life.

Mrs. Streeter remained at her father's house and among her friends for some time after their marriage. Milton was truly a fond and doating husband. The brief period of "first impressions" passed pleasantly away. Late in the fall, he came with his wife to the Central Village, and went to board with his own father. A few months had worn away much of the novelty of his new situation, and left him standing among the sober facts of his life. The poetry of wedded life had all been read over, much of it re-read, and some of the most interesting parts committed to memory. And they both began, as if by natural instincts, to con over the sober scenes before them. They turned over a leaf, and began to read the graver sections of prose, studying particularly the "didactic pieces," occasionally looking at the "pathetic," which gave rise to a shower of tears, until at length they reached the knotty questions of mutual duty, social philosophy, and domestic economy. There they found, to their mutual amazement, that they were utterly unfitted for each other.

Elvira was fond of show, and dress, and young company, and afternoon balls, and evening dances; while Milton's chief enjoyment consisted in his dog and gun, and the perpetual rumble of that profitless nine-pin alley. Dress with him was a matter of indifference. Of course, the young wife wished for her old enjoyments; and the young husband could not sympathize with her. On this point began an issue, and a difference between them. If indulged in her wishes, she was very pleasant; if not, she was disposed to petulance, and sometimes gave utterance to frivolous complaints. It was the worst and most unwise thing she could possibly have done, both for her own interest and that of her husband. He had no fortitude, or philosophy, to bear his own cares and troubles, much less the weight that was laid upon him by his better half. Every complaint and every censure, only inflamed his feelings, or sunk him deeper in melancholy. Mutual grievances had commenced, and neither had the wisdom or tact to control them.

Another circumstance added fire to the combustible

materials of which Streeter was composed. His wife, whether justly or not, had a sort of sinister reputation, half concealed, among young men in the community. Milton was credulous. He was told of her reputed foibles, and his jealousy was aroused; especially when some of the most fun-loving pretended that, by his faithless spouse, either they, or their friends, had been honored,

“With favors loving, sweet and precious.”

Such pretensions were as false as they were mischievous. They served only to inflame his wrath, and make him swear and rave like a mad man. And this was sport to those engaged in it; but cruel, very cruel for him and his simple-hearted companion. It caused them many bitter pangs.

Nor was she herself always prudent on that subject. She sometimes added confirmation to his previous convictions, by pretending that many young men were deeply enamoured of her, and, had she not given her hand to him, she might have entered a more advantageous marriage relation. These were boastings exceedingly misplaced, producing a terrible effect on the sensitive mind of Streeter already disturbed, and fretted by his previous troubles.

There was a dancing school in town during the winter, and she was anxious to attend. He was unwilling, both from want of funds and want of taste for such enjoyments. She, however, persisted, importuned, entreated, and shed tears; but all to no purpose. She told him, at length, that several young men were anxious for it;—had invited her to attend and would come after her. She named one or two, who she said had promised to do so. Still he was inexorable. Hard words followed, tears gushed from his wife, and Milton was sad. At length he yielded, so far as to attend the dancing school once or twice, and afterwards rode out with her several times for her gratification. But complaints and petulance had thus commenced, and they continued, increasing daily, until the fatal catastrophe that severed forever the marriage relations.

He boarded with his father for some months ; but his married life was far from being pleasant. The whole scene was stormy and unpropitious. Curtain lectures were frequently given and received by each party. These usually commenced soon after retiring to rest, and often continued so long as to exhaust the patience of Milton. Who was most to blame, cannot be ascertained ; but they made him very unhappy.

On one occasion, he rose from his bed, and, half-dressed, fled from the troublesome scene, and sought the solemn stillness of moonlight, in the quiet of a "bush pasture," not far off. It was late in the evening. He remained quite a long time in that solitude. His father, who was yet at work in the mill, was sent for. He started in pursuit of his wandering son, found him walking the pasture and weeping. It was sometime before he could be persuaded to return to the house and resume his accustomed quiet. No inquiries could draw from him the reasons of this singular conduct. A sadness more deep than ever, came over him, and if asked concerning it, he either refused to answer, or barely muttered something about "trouble." Every trouble seemed to increase his headache ; and, with the increase of that, his wildness and eccentricity increased.

His parents and relatives saw him exhibit no unkindness towards his wife. It is incredible, however, that one of his peculiar moral organization should not sometimes treat her with severity, especially if he received any considerable real or fancied provocation. Yet the family of his murdered wife are disposed to acquit him of unjust severity towards her. Her own father appeared as a witness for the defence at the trial of Streeter. It is very singular that among the relations on both sides there should be so manifest a disposition to sympathize with him. Facts have come to the knowledge of others, that show him either wantonly severe, or else morally insane. He was certainly a very unhappy man—unhappy from the depressing influence of his constitutional headache, the excitement of jealousy, the feeling that the world was



against him, and the jeers and countless provocations of the unthinking multitude around him. His very misery would naturally sour his disposition, and make him anything but an agreeable companion.

But now a scene of a deeper and darker import is fast approaching. The events of a wonderful Providence are weaving and interweaving, into a complete texture around the unfortunate couple, more delicate, and yet more fatal than the spider's web. They remained not long as boarders in his father's house. The intercourse between Elvira and other members of the household, might not have been of the most agreeable kind. Towards spring, they went to board with a Mr. Wheeler, who lived just north of the Main street, in that two story house,—a new building, with large semi-circular porticos on either side. Here they remained till Spring, when, having hired a tenement of Mr. D. A. Hawks, a short distance south of the main street, they removed into it and commenced house-keeping.

Set up for themselves, it became necessary for them to look in to all the minutiae pertaining to the administration of the "independent sovereignty" of a family. But here new perplexities arose. Neither of them was fitted to discharge these duties. The constant provision necessary for supply, was often exhausting to their limited treasury. Sneeeler himself was not at that time in the receipt of an extensive revenue. He was not disposed to apply himself, in a way, to supply the deficit. His wife was more industrious.

She would ply her needle, and busy herself with persevering application for the benefit of herself and her improvident husband. But her efforts were insufficient to supply the constant necessities of a family. Milton occasionally worked as a day laborer, but with no constancy of effort. Of course, his income was small, and his living must correspond. The unhappy wife might not always have had enough in the house to prepare a full repast for her tired and hungry spouse, on his return from a wearisome chase in the forest.

To add to their perplexities, they "took boarders,"—the two young Reynolds. These young men seemed to hover, like evil geni, around the pathway of Milton Streeter. Kindred in their tastes and feelings, they were his frequent companions. They were not probably the most profitable, as boarders, for eking out a narrow income. But such as they were, they lived upon him;—whether from the preference of his wife, or his own choice, it is not possible to say. They will soon appear more intimately connected with this dark history.

In the meantime, the busy tongue of certain fun-loving spirits, in the neighborhood, was not idle. Somehow many, who stood in more elevated places in life, sometimes descended, from their own proud positions, to join in the mirth, and utter their jokes at the expense of poor Milton Streeter.

It is the privilege of frail humanity to "laugh and be fat!" This expression involves the necessity of cheerfulness, and occasional merriment, in the various stages of human history. Nothing ministers so much to social enjoyment—nothing is so calculated to afford relaxation, and relieve a mind overpressed with business, and fit it for those graver and profounder efforts which are to work out its sublimest destiny. He is a poor philosopher, who would repress every outburst of laughter, and veil the face in perpetual gloom, with a view of moral and religious improvement! The young, in particular, must have their pastimes; but, in all classes, the pleasant smile and hearty laugh are indicative of that state of mind best suited to conduct the social relations of life.

The best gifts of Providence, however, are liable to abuse. Depredations may be committed, by merriment, upon that same social state which needs merriment as an element of its vitality. And thus an element of good is converted into an instrument of evil.

Milton Streeter had long been a target for all the fun-loving in his neighborhood. Their sallies had now become more frequent than ever, without regard to the results upon his disordered mind. Scarcely could he appear in the streets but some one was ready to strike him

with jests and raillery, generally reflecting upon the honor of his wife. So completely was the thread from the distaff of destiny wound around him, that he seemed irrecoverably involved in the toils of fate. His jealousy was so excited, at times, that he was unwilling to be out of sight of his own house. On one occasion, at work at haying, he refused to rake hay on the side of the cart out of sight of his house. This subjected him to new ridicule, and the ridicule rendered his passions more intense.

All these things were the richest sport to his tormentors. They little thought that what was "sport to them was death to him"—at least, was producing terrible results upon his hapless wife.

That nine-pin alley, also, still engrossed his attention; and formed at once the source of his joys, and the evil spirit ministering to his misfortunes. He hung around it, as by an irresistible fascination, allured by the voice of his compeers, and yet rendered furious, by the taunts aimed at his wife. He was the fool in all-fools play, and acted his part with most admirable *naivette*.

But time was wearing away. The summer months had again appeared with their heat and their exuberance. At this time, another source of trouble and misfortune, for Streeter and his wife, was developed. A man named Enoch Bacon, formerly a resident of the place, suddenly appeared there again. Mrs. Streeter, during the lifetime of Bacon's wife, had been employed in his family; and their acquaintance was both honorable and pleasant. Having returned on a brief visit from a residence in Cuba, he, naturally enough, sought the former friend of his wife, to do some necessary needle work. Accordingly, he called at the house and requested her to do it. With this request she cheerfully complied, unconscious of any wrong. It so happened, however, that he called in the absence of Streeter. This fact was soon brought to the ears of his constant tormentors, and, thereupon, a battery was opened upon him from that quarter. It was intended, of course, as mere sport, but its effect was astounding. Every outburst of the boisterous mirth occasioned by it, conveyed

a deadly pang to the bosom of his poor wife. His jealousy was aroused to the highest point against Bacon. Unfortunately, he believed all that was told him, and his rage was intense. He swore that Bacon should never again enter his house. When told, falsely, that he had been there during his absence, he raved like one mad, and went home in that plight only to abuse his unoffending companion. This had been done repeatedly.

One evening, returning from labor, he brought home a large club, and set it aside, swearing that if Bacon entered his door, he would beat his brains out with it. His wife afterwards exhibited that club to the neighbors, and told them what use he had sworn to make of it. This strange infatuation of Streeter, prevented his wife from performing the needle work, which she had so innocently engaged to do. And thus the cruel mirth of his tormentors, not only imbruted his own mind and brought woe upon his family, but also deprived him, in a measure, of the means of a livelihood through the labors of his wife.

Bacon, however, made but a short stay in the place. His departure was a relief to the disturbed mind of Milton; but the brutal feeling, so greatly aroused, was not easily allayed. It still remained, in all its force, to be transferred to any other object that might chance to cross his path.

"Do you see that?" said a sharp-faced, respectable looking man, holding out to Streeter a small piece of money. "Take it and give it to your wife; she will know what it means." That was enough. A fresh impulse was given to his already maddened jealousy. He swore by rule—he had instructors enough among his confederates, with finishing examples from higher life—his rage was terrible, but he raved to the high glee of those who happened to see him. Yet they saw not the issue. They did not follow him even in thought to his home, where, blinded by the frenzy of his rage, he abused his companion without even telling her the cause. While they were laughing and repeating the story of his rage, as a capital joke, she was suffering its terrible results, without even knowing the



grounds of his violence. If the respectable and the disreputable lovers of fun, in that place, had let him alone—or, if they had taken as much pains to assuage, as to inflame, his jealousy and his indignation, Milton Streeeter might not now have been a murderer, and his wife might not have been invested with so bloody a winding sheet. *They* are not to be held guiltless, who even in merriment, inflame the passions of others; especially, when they know the disastrous results of such merriment, on those against whom its shafts are directed. The results were well known in the case of Streeeter, but the course still was followed, with a fatal perseverance. Even his joking tormentors became, at length, enraged at him, because he was enraged at their jokes and their folly.

But after all, he was an unsafe man to live at large in the community. He was ill calculated to endure the sharp conflicts which every man must meet with, in his journey through the world. He threatened violence to Mr. Hawks, and to burn his buildings, because he sued him for debt and ejected him from the tenement he had occupied for a few months. And there is certainly ground of apprehension, even now, that, if he were let loose, he would put that threat in execution.

The few months spent in the tenement of Mr. Hawks, developed a series of matrimonial storms, but little creditable to either party. The outward influence already mentioned, added to the natural incompatibility of their respective tempers, left only brief intervals of sunshine and repose. Yet Milton still loved his wife. Even his very quarrels often terminated in anguish to his own heart, and in efforts at reconciliation. He had a strange mixture of conflicting elements in his composition—alternately gloomy and credulous, reckless, brutal and affectionate! His headache continued; his boarders were eating out his substance; his melancholy became more settled and profound; he still imagined that the world was against him, and he had even, already, made an attempt to take his own life. He cared not to live, for the world had no comfort for him.

By the peculiar construction of his tenement, the sleeping room of himself and his wife was contiguous to that occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Hawks. The two apartments were separated only by a thin partition; and conversation in the one, might, in ordinary circumstances, be distinctly heard in the other. Of course, Mr. Hawks and his wife, became the unwilling listeners to many things, which gave them an impression exceedingly unfavorable to Milton Streeter. People differed, as to the relative amount of blame which should be attached to either party. But Mr. Hawks and his family were very decided, in throwing the blame chiefly, if not wholly, upon him. He was governed much by animal instincts—was often cruel and unfeeling towards his associates, and would sometimes impose burdens upon his wife, even in ill health, which, with her delicate constitution, she was but poorly able to bear.

But the strange doings of that private room, revealed to ears unwilling to hear—the curtain lectures—the ceaseless complainings—the profanity and vulgar language—the mutual crimination and recrimination—the violence, threats, sobs, shrieks, censures and supplications—these are things belonging entirely to the unwritten history of that hapless pair, and are not to be recorded in this place. They had their effect upon the minds of the reluctant listeners, and exhibited a most deplorable state of family dissensions.

Streeter, however, was a very miserable man. His "troubles," real or imaginary, perplexed him and made him violent; and his violence reacted upon himself and made him still more miserable. With all the influences operating against him, he could not be otherwise. Perhaps he might have threatened to murder his wife. It does not so appear in evidence, nor does she appear to have been apprehensive of the result. Yet she often freely spoke to the neighbors of her feelings and her convictions. At one time, as she relates, he kept a rope in the house on purpose to hang himself. He had, also, a razor kept in the room where she slept, which she supposed was

designed to cut her throat. She also told the neighbors that he had threatened to kill her, and then either hang himself, or cut his own throat. That he had entertained the purpose of committing suicide, and had even once made the attempt, appears in evidence before the court, at the time of his trial.

The constant quarrels of this unhappy couple were, without doubt, accompanied with some threats of violence. Many incidents go to confirm what might naturally be expected from their peculiar dispositions brought in conflict with each other. Enraged, one day, Streeter came in with an axe in his hand, and brandished the fearful instrument about the head of his wife. A little girl, from one of the neighbors, happened to be present and saw the fearful display, which she supposed was done in playfulness. Loud words followed on the part of the husband and wife. The girl saw a barrel of soap, just made, standing close by. "Mrs. Streeter," said she, "if I was in your place, I would dip his head in that soap barrel!" This remark so pleased the quarreling pair, that they both burst into a loud laugh, and thus the matter was ended.

Things, however, had now come to such a pass, that Mr. Hawks could endure it no longer; and, of consequence, he gave his brawling tenants leave to find for themselves another abode. Streeter was greatly incensed on receiving this intimation; threats were uttered, and some fears were entertained that he would, in some way, do violence to the property or person of Mr. Hawks. He did purpose to girdle some young fruit trees belonging to Mr. H., and sought the services of a lad in the neighborhood to assist him in doing it. The lad, however, declined the villainous aid, and afterwards revealed the matter to some of his friends.

After some exertions, Streeter succeeded in obtaining another tenement, and made preparations to remove. His goods were soon put in order, loaded upon the proper vehicle, and started off. There was something melancholy and ominous in that departure, as indicating the uncertain future, in no wise pleasant to the philanthropist or

the philosopher. The condition, circumstances and treatment of the unfortunate pair, were in no way calculated to make them better citizens, or teach them the art of being happy in each others' society. Every link in the chain of events seemed to be more fearfully fatal, and to bind them by an irresistible destiny to the terrible result. Follow them, reader, as they pass along towards their new home. It was on the right bank of the Quinebaug river, nearly a mile below, at a place called Columbia village.



## CHAPTER VII.

Columbia Village—its people—Streeter's jealousy—abuse of his wife—she resolves to make complaint before a magistrate—her stratagem to deceive her husband.

“O life! thou art a galling load,  
Along a rough and weary road,  
To wretches such as I!”

From the Central Village in Southbridge, go down, if you please, the main street towards the east. There are several fine dwelling houses on each side of the street. You will pass a “spectacle shop” on the right, and a grist mill and saw mill at a little distance from the street, on the left. The latter establishment is owned by Mr. Royal Smith, commonly called “Corporal Smith,” and sometimes “Corporal Trim.” Why he received this appellation, is not easy to determine. If it was intended as a reproach, it was certainly undeserved. He is a pious man, and, professionally, a christian. He sometimes keeps a dog, it is true; but what then? Dogs are common there, and form a fancy stock of canine brokerage in the whole town. Mr. Smith is a respectable citizen, and takes honest toll.

A little farther on, you come to the old dam of the Columbian factory. That little house of a rusty red color, on the left, is the place where Henry Barber sometimes inhabits. You pass the rocky prominence on the right, and soon reach the village itself. The first house is on the left, close by the river's brink. It is a long, low, half upright, suspicious looking building, at best. Some year or two ago, it was the residence of an old man named Joe Pope, whose conscience was not over-scrupulous about the commission of little sins, to say nothing of a larger and graver kind. He had sold rum clandestinely, *adversus legem*, much to the annoyance of certain citizens of the town. Whereupon one dark night, a number of them

assembled around his house, discovered his *spirituous* treasures, and then gave him his choice, either to empty his barrels upon the ground or submit to a prosecution for selling spirits, *absque privilegio*, and thus violating the license law. He chose the former, and his rum soon ran gurgling, down into the river for the special benefit of the little fishes frisking there. He groaned outright, when he saw the spirit departing from his house, and felt himself deprived of its profits and its inspirations! Whether this course was just, or judicious, must be left for others to decide. The old man soon after left that inhospitable place, and took up his abode in an out-of-the-way house, about three miles distant at the south, where he resumed his old business, and endeavored to make amends for his losses. His place of residence was a frequent resort of the two worthy confederates of Milton Streeter—viz., Edwin and Marvin Reynolds. The spirit obtained from Joe Pope, they often conveyed to Streeter's house; and he, perhaps, sometimes drank it when presented to his lips.

As you proceed down the river you pass two or three dwellings on the left, the last of which is a large brick house. The next you meet with, is a row of three or four slate colored buildings on the right—two story, double, dwelling houses, bearing the appearance of having been seared or blistered by heat. That was produced a year or two before, by the burning of the factory which stood nearly opposite on the left, fronting the blistered block of buildings. There stand now the old wheel, a part of the flume, some of the walls and abutments, with timbers on them charred and half consumed—the relics of a once large and flourishing structure. But it is all desolate now! The rank weeds grow on the spot where once whirled the humming spindles, and where busy industry wove the web of life! The old railing still remains, scorched and scathed, near the roadside, and the blistered dwellings hold their place to tell the devastating influence of the fiery element.

This constitutes all the village. Its physical aspect would seem to render it a fit abode for bats and owls,

ghosts and murderers. It stands in a narrow defile. The Quinebaug winds its sombre waters among the willows at the left. High hills of pasture and woodland frown in their stillness at the right. Dark pines and other dusky evergreens skirt the road for some distance below. And the scene altogether is such as might awaken the apprehensions of the timid and the fears of the superstitious.

The business of the place is gone; and its inhabitants, not belonging to a class possessed of a high order of intellect or of morals, are generally poor and thriftless, to say nothing of other characteristics, which it may not be proper even to mention.

The reader will now please to walk down to that two story house, the first in the slate colored row, after passing the brick dwelling on the left. The small building jutting out from the west end towards the street, has been used as an out-house for wood and other household articles. The main building is double, having two separate tenements under the same roof, with a front door for entrance at each end. Each tenement contains three rooms on the ground floor, and the same number in the second story. The tenement at the upper or west end is vacant. The other is occupied by Mr. Benjamin Dillaber and his family. Mr. Dillaber is one of those singular bipeds sometimes met with in the community. He is neither "half horse," nor "half alligator;" though, if he lived among the "suckers" of the west, he might resemble some specimens of that hippo-crocodile tribe which vegetates along the "Father of waters." His face is wrinkled, sunburnt, and knurly, with an expression not very intellectual, nor yet altogether unpleasant. His morals—but let all that pass! He is far from being the worst of men, though he may not rank among the very best. He has his mission to the world, and is just as much entitled to the consideration of the philosopher, the philanthropist, and the christian, as any other *bipes implumes*, or specimen of mortality in the whole earth.

That load of goods that has just stopped before the door of the vacant tenement, belongs to Milton Streeter and his wife. While they are unloading their "plua-

der," let us go in and examine the tenement. Opening the front door, you first enter the hall, a space about five feet wide, extending half through the house. At the left, there is a door opening into the front room, a parlor about twelve feet square. On the right, is the narrow stairway leading to the rooms above. At the further end of the hall, a door opens, at the left, into a room about eleven by thirteen feet, in the rear of the parlor—a sort of dining room and kitchen altogether. At the right of this, and in the rear of the stairway, is a small bed room, the door of which opens into the dining room. From the dining room you go out into a small room, added to the main building, and used as a "sink room."

The rooms on the second floor are arranged in precisely the same order with those below. The front chamber is a trifle smaller than its mate on the lower floor; the rear chamber a little larger, but directly over its companion below; and the bed room is of the same size and appearance with its confederate dormitory underneath.

The goods were soon unloaded, and Mr. and Mrs. Streeter have taken up their abode in that ominous tenement. Their "boarders" have gone thither also, and taken quarters in one of the snug rooms on the second floor. The building was finished in a plain and cheap manner, and designed for the use of factory operatives. Their furniture is all arranged, and things are settled once more, in a place they call their home.

But it was far from being a happy home, or a happy life that they now enjoyed. The troubles which caused their ejection from the tenement of Mr. Hawks, had in no wise diminished by their removal. Indeed, there was a constant augmentation. The improvidence and want of energy on the part of each, seemed only to increase their burdens, and thereby render them mutually more irritable and petulant towards each other. Milton could not live without food; and how could the kindest companion prepare it for him, if she had none to prepare? It is unquestioned that they had not always provision in the house sufficient for the demands of appetite.



Streeter spent not his substance in liquor. In this respect he differed from most of his companions. He could not use intoxicating drink to excess, in consequence of the terrible effects produced on his head. It invariably increased the pain; and produced a delirium, which he himself could not endure. What others found to afford an intoxication of pleasure, was to him the delirium of misery. Of course, though his boarders kept it, he seldom used it.

Early in August, Milton's father removed from Southbridge to Sutton; and of course the unfortunate son was deprived of that paternal watchfulness which had always been exercised over him, and often with the most salutary effect. Indeed the father, lamenting the calamity that brought so much infamy upon the family, has expressed the conviction, that had he remained in town, the terrible disaster would not have happened. Mr. Janes and his wife, who had been so much a favorite of Milton, had returned to the town, and occupied a tenement on Dresser Hill. But differences of some kind had occurred to destroy the intimate relations, that had formerly existed between them. The two families were not on intimate terms with each other, probably from some disaffection towards Mrs. Streeter, on the part of Janes and his wife. But whatever was the cause, Milton was deprived of that solace of sisterly affection, which had given him joy in early life. He was cut loose, as it were, from the strong ties, that had held in check the impetuosities of his spirit. He stood alone, bound indeed, to an unsympathizing wife, and to a world that seemed all against him.

It was a few weeks after Mr. Asa Streeter, the father, had left town, in the early part of September, that Milton was obliged to take up his abode in that village of the high sounding and euphonious name of Columbia. He was there surrounded by influences, probably not the best calculated to develope the good qualities of his heart. It was not indeed a place,

“Where ghaists and houlets nightly cry.”

But everything around him, the associations of the place and the people, all tended to produce a result the very opposite of what might have been desired. One or the other of the young men named Reynolds was with him most of the time. Profanity and loud talk, angry words and vulgar expressions, were ever and anon resounding in his ears. Roaming the forest, with dog and gun, was his chief delight and his chief employment. His jealousy still burned with fiercer violence, augmented by the increased and increasing taunts and jeers poured in upon him, from all quarters. His wife, of course, was maltreated. The influences that had, hertofore, restrained him, now ceased to operate. They were too far removed to exert their power over him. The voice of Hannah was not always near; the admonitions of his father which had usually restrained him, during the storm of his passions, were now unheard. Seeing the effects,—the tempestuous and half-phrenzied state of his mind, his associates joked with redoubled diligence. Grave men looked on and laughed, unthoughtful of the terrible state of his mind. And he was being borne along, by an imperceptible current, into that vortex of phrenzy which terminated in the fatal deed of blood, and no one essayed to prevent it.

Not far from the same time there were singular visions, said to have been hovering and dancing around the dreaming hours of Elvira's father, at the old homestead. The report is—take it, reader, for what it is worth—but report has stated that there are two small graves, showing their grassy mounds, not far from the residence of Mr. Houghton; but what departed infants were they, whose bones repose there, is known only within a very narrow circle. Mystery has drawn her veil around them, impervious to the eye of peeping, prying curiosity. Just prior to the murder of Elvira, the gray-haired old man was startled from a deep sleep, following a day of toil, by the shrill cries of little children! He roused himself, looked anxiously around the room and listened; but heard no noise, and saw no objects, that could give utterance to cries so singular and so absolutely distressing. He composed him-

self to sleep, but was afterwards again awakened by the same piercing cries. And three times, according to the common course of oneiromancy or dreaming auguries, did that same cry of wretchedness and agony break the stillness of the midnight air; three times was that wearied man aroused from his heavy slumbers by those same infantile voices; and three times did he shake sleep from his heavy eyes, and search for the hidden causes of so singular a tumult. No living children were there. It could be no other than spectral infants, coming up with attenuated forms, in their baby winding-sheets, from those two little graves! These things the old man deemed to be fearfully portentous—pointing with an unmistakeable indication to an evil, somehow mysteriously connected with his daughter. What wonderful causes produced that singular vision? Was it conscience starting, with renewed vigor, into fresh life, during the waning years of that unostentatious man? How very strange it is, that little spectral children should come up from their spirit home, raise their tiny voices, rend the air with their doleful cries, and thus rouse the sleeping ears of that widowed man! Were they holding a frolicsome, ghostly revel, in anticipation of the near approach of a mother, to their unearthly home? No answer can be given to these questions, though they were deemed of solemn import. But here is the story. Reader, believe it if you will; thousands will not.

If, however, omens are of any import if the lessons of the past, point with any distinctness to the developements of the future, if in any case,

“Coming events cast their shadows before,”

it were no hard matter to predict, that a fearful evil of some kind would befall Milton Streeter and his wife. The state of mind on the part of each, the interchange of words and deeds, in no wise conciliating, all pointed to a calamity, terrible in its character, and bloody in its result.

How far the young chaps, the inmates of his family, may have exerted an influence in producing that result,

no one can determine. What control they might have had over the mind of the unhappy wife, cannot now be known. She certainly suffered no inconsiderable abuse, from the roused passions of her husband. Day by day his violence increased. It is not possible, that it should have arisen so suddenly to the high pitch which it attained, without some exciting cause concealed from public observation. There is something exceedingly mysterious in the doings of that unquiet family; and something equally suspicious, in the character and conduct of those two young men who boarded there. But whatever may have been the causes, there were certainly threats and violence used, until it became a matter too serious to be longer endured. Consequently, Mrs. Streeter resolved to make complaint before a magistrate, and take the legal steps necessary to free herself from such continued abuse. She may have had good grounds of complaint, but her course of conduct through the whole affair, seems clearly to show that she had but little fear of her life.

That her purpose was formed at the instigation and by the advice of her boarders, cannot now be affirmed. This may, or it may not, have been the case. They were of a turn of mind very different from Milton,—less gruff and repulsive, and probably made themselves agreeable by sympathy, and perhaps assistance, in her misfortunes. Nor would it be surprising at all, if, for such kindness, they were rewarded with special confidence, and favors not otherwise to be bestowed. She might be led to listen to their counsel, in a matter of such peculiar interest, as the step she had proposed to take.

Before proceeding to the magistrate, it was deemed indispensable to remove Streeter out of the way, so that he should be ignorant of the proceedings about to be instituted, and, at the same time, secure in a place where he could be found, if needed. Accordingly, by collusion between Mrs. Streeter and Marvin Reynolds, that object was obtained. On Saturday, the 21st of October, Milton and his two hopeful boarding associates, sallied forth on one of their usual excursions, where they managed to kill



time, if nothing else. Meanwhile, the luckless Elvira repaired to the office of Frederic Botham, Esq., an aged and venerable attorney, skilled in the knotty and crooked things of the law, with a view of entering her complaint against her hard-hearted spouse. For some reason, however, the infirm attorney refused to act, on that day, and deferred the whole matter until the ensuing Monday. This was quite unexpected to the trembling complainant, and quite unfavorable to the consummation of her plans. She would be exposed to the danger of violence, during the intervening period, in case her intentions should come to the ears of her already incensed husband. The time, however, passed off without exposure. Her officious boarders took special care to have her doings concealed from the unsuspecting man. The Sabbath passed. It was a day of momentous interest to the ill-fated woman. Could she have lifted the veil and looked but a single day into the mysterious future, she would have shrunk back, shocked and terror-struck at the view. Doubtless she would have passed her time very differently with reference to the momentous interests of another world. What a sad admonition to all, to have always in view the contingencies of a sudden departure, and so live as to die without regret. That Sabbath passed, probably as many others before it had been spent, in utter disregard of Sabbath duties!

## CHAPTER VIII.

Mrs. Streeter makes her complaint—Warrant issued by the magistrate for Streeter's apprehension—his arrest—his appearance in Court—proposed separation—Full particulars of the murder of Mrs. Streeter—Streeter attempts to commit suicide.

“ Oh woful day! most lamentable day!  
Never was seen so black a day as this!”

On Monday morning, October 23d, 1843, before eight o'clock, Mrs. Streeter had gone again to the office of the magistrate, to prosecute her suit. Prior to that period, her husband had been inveigled from his home, under the pretence of making a short visit to a brother of one of his boarders. It had been arranged, between Elvira and Marvin Reynolds, that Streeter should be enticed away to some place where he could be conveniently watched, and, at the same time, readily found and secured by an officer, who might be sent after him. Accordingly, he was invited to go and see Otis Reynolds, who lived some three miles distant; and, unsuspecting of trickery, he went cheerfully with the two brothers. This was done, as the parties alleged, because they feared the violence of his temper, if he should know, beforehand, the steps about to be taken. Having arranged these preliminaries, the legal steps were prosecuted, at the office of the magistrate. The wife stated her grievances, entered her complaint, and, in due time, a warrant was issued, and placed in the hands of A. F. Ammidown, Esq., who proceeded, forthwith, to arrest the still unsuspecting husband. He repaired to the spot where he was directed to go, found the inveigled man, without difficulty, and made known his business.

Thunderstruck at the intelligence, Milton paused in mute amazement, and was completely unmanned. Pale and trembling, he followed the officer without resistance. Still the lineaments of his dull countenance gave fearful

signs of the tempest that was raging within. He was taken before the magistrate, confronted with the disaffected Elvira, and required to give a reason for his singular violation of his plighted vows. Witnesses were examined, whose testimony went to show that Milton was a vile and brutal man. The wife testified that, living with him, or even being in his presence, she was afraid of her life. Milton, in the meantime, looked on and listened in silence.

His features were naturally rather disagreeable. The face was plump and full, cheek bones high, nose prominent and thick set, peering up between hazle eyes, which looked out, with a somewhat sinister expression, from beneath protruding eyebrows. The forehead, not very low, was sloping, and the head, towards the back part, rose, bald and bare, to an apex, like the summit of a snow-capped mountain. The whole expression was quite unpleasant, even when lighted up with his blindest smiles.

But now his face was darker than usual. The brow was knit. The expression was sour—nay, surly. It was the threatening scowl that precedes a tempest. A close observer could see the workings of a half phrenzied mind. No other man—no careless observer could, possibly, enter the recesses of that dark mind, see its bewilderment, and ascertain its true position. He was aroused to the highest pitch of excitement. Still he was cool. That excitement was mostly concealed, except the occasional signs that were seen, bursting through a cool exterior. He was all passion; the inner man was torn with violent and conflicting emotions; but outwardly, he was as one muffled, who wraps his cloak closely around him, during the cool of winter. He acted; he lived, he moved about among his friends and companions; but he scarcely knew why all this was done. And, when the scene was passed, he remembered it; but it was like the recollection of a fleeting dream of the wildest phantasms.

The legal proceedings continued, moving slowly towards an adjustment of difficulties. It was the cool formality of legal technicalities, of moral maxims and sage admonitions, doled out in the language of indifference.

Milton heard it all and assented to it; but it left no other impression upon him, than an increase of mental excitement. It was at length arranged that the husband and wife should separate, that they should divide their goods, and each pursue the journey of life alone. To this arrangement Milton assented, quietly and silently. No legal or compulsory force was needed. He yielded without a word of resistance or of complaint, as one torn, half distracted, from the dearest interests of the world. He shed no tears; the fountains were all dried up. He was then put under bonds to keep the peace, and was also required to leave the State. He heard it all, and saw the whole process, as one having ears to hear, yet feeling but little interest in the matter.

But the result—it was too painful to think of! To one of his temperament, it was overwhelming. To be exiled from his home and his friends—to be banished from the scenes which, though diversified with lights and shadows, were still dear to him—to be expatriated and driven from the endearments of his young life, and to be forced even from the woman he had loved with such phrenzied emotion—to go forth alone, with no friend, no comforter, no home, no companion, and leave behind his wife for others to enjoy—it was too much for one of his peculiar organization! Men of stronger minds might have shrunk from the issue. Milton Streeter was overpowered.

Joseph L. Janes, his brother-in-law, and Geo. A. Vinton, became his sureties to keep the peace towards his wife. The trial closed. All parties left the office of the magistrate to consummate the agreements there entered into. As a first step, Streeter agreed to give his brother-in-law a bill of sale of all his part of the household furniture, in consideration of money due to Mr. Janes, and the costs of Court, which he had paid that day. They stopped a short time at the store of Mr. Vinton; writings were made out, arranged and duly signed; and then the two proceeded to the residence of Mr. Janes, where they remained until after dinner.

Meantime, Mrs. Streeter returned to her own house,



accompanied with some of her friends. Marvin Reynolds seems to have been her special attendant. He remained at the house with her, to assist in arranging the furniture, preparatory to the final separation and division of property.

Milton ate his dinner in sadness, by the side of his sister Hannah. It was a bitter day for him, and his food was eaten in bitterness of soul. He said but little, yet his whole frame shook with agitation. His motions were wild, and often involuntary. To add to his excitement, his fun-loving tormentors must have a little more "sport," even at the expense of his misfortunes.

"Streeter," said one of them, "I understand that you and your wife have parted, and you are going out of the State. When you are gone, the young men can see your wife and wait upon her just as they please."

Never was a remark more fatally mistimed. It added fresh fuel to his jealousy and indignation.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, Streeter and Janes went down to his house, with a horse and wagon to get his furniture. It was about a mile distant. Arriving at the place, they found Elvira and Marvin Reynolds sitting, calm and quiet, the sole occupants of the house. Streeter seems not, before this time, to have been jealous of Reynolds. But now he started outright, as if he had been suddenly awakened from a dream of terror. He stared amazed at the quiet occupants. A cloud settled more darkly over his brow. He had "looked grieved" through all the day, but now he was "more cast down" than ever. The words, which, a short time before, he had heard concerning the future infidelity of his wife, came fresh over him. He saw partially their verification, and the sad prospect of dishonor moved him with a deeper and intenser purpose. He loved his wife, and with all their dissensions, how could he leave her to take her chance in the world and revel in infamy?

The goods were soon loaded, and Milton and his faithful brother-in-law left the house. Elvira and Marvin Reynolds remained sole occupants when they left. They went to the house of Janes, and there found Edwin Rey-

holds on their arrival. What could all that mean? Had the two treacherous brothers conspired to favor each other in the enjoyment of his wife's smiles? The goods were hastily unloaded. Milton appeared strange. His movements were in jerks; the doors slammed after him as he passed through them. He muttered to himself something about "trouble," brief snatches of which were occasionally overheard:—"he would rather die than live for he had no comfort." He stepped out of the door, siezed a saw, and commenced sawing wood. But every movement was impetuous and eccentric. Marcus Randall, a near neighbor, stood by and saw him, in his wild movements. He lifted several sticks and played the antics of a madman. He sawed furiously awhile, and then stopped and stood as one amazed; then sawed again with the same impetuosity; but with the exception of these quick, eccentric motions, he appeared cool, and his countenance, a little flushed and bloated, wore its usual stolidity. He went into the house, muttering incoherent expressions in a voice scarcely audible. "Trouble" seemed to be the burden of his husky tones. At length he spoke out, as if unconscious of what he said;—"He would not be in trouble long, for he would destroy himself that night!" His friends were fearful of the results, and kept him under their constant *surveillance*; and his wife had been warned against being in his presence alone.

He wished to go down to his house again, "to get some shirts," as he said, and other things which were left behind. There were *other things* which he thought more of than shirts. Janes was unwilling that he should go alone, and accordingly proposed to go with him. Streeter consented.

He had inquired particularly if his razors had been brought away. After some search, they were found among his goods, and laid carefully in a secure place. Janes afterwards discovered that one of them was missing.

The two started off together, and arrived at Streeter's house about five o'clock in the afternoon. They entered the house together, and found no one there. Elvira and

her special attendant had disappeared. Janes entered the front room and sat down. Milton passed through the hall to the dining room ; then returned and went up stairs, but came down again immediately, observing that Elvira had gone into Dillaber's apartment. He went out, saw Dillaber's boy and sent him to call his wife. Receiving the request, she laid down her work, went out, and meeting her husband, followed him into the tenement which they had hardly yet abandoned.

As they passed the threshold of the front door, Streeter said, " Elvira, I want to see you."

Then he inquired for some shirts which he was to have. She told him they were in a basket in the bed room up stairs. He next inquired for some new cloth cut out for shirts, but not made. She replied, that she thought he might let her have that, for what he owed her. He made no further remark, but went up stairs. She, at the same time, entered the front room and sat down with Mr. Janes. After sitting awhile, she called aloud to Streeter, requesting him not to tumble her basket, for the things he wanted, lay on the top. A moment after, she started and went up stairs, leaving Janes in the room below. The door still stood open. Streeter was in the bed room above. Unapprehensive of danger, or very unthoughtful, she went directly into his presence. The rage of a tiger, in quest of food burned in his bosom. He had inveigled her into that narrow place. The room was rest of its furniture. The basket stood before them. While her attention was diverted, he slipped stealthily behind her and seized her by the head with his left hand. A sudden scream followed. He brandished a sharp razor, held in his right hand, and then drew it—once—twice—across her throat ! A terrible wound was inflicted. Blood spouted in torrents down her delicate form. She slipped quickly from his tiger grasp, turned and ran bleeding down the stairs. Half way down she met Janes who had heard the first scream and sprang to the rescue. He took her by the arm—she could not speak—and led her out at the front door towards the apartments of Dillaber. Entering there, he called wildly for help.



Sirecter in the act of murdering his wife!







Meantime, Streeter, left in the fatal bedroom, drew the same savage razor across his own throat. The blood flowed freely, and mingled, jet by jet, with the life's blood of his murdered wife! It was his intention to die by her side, that they might both rest together in one common grave.

Mrs. Dillaber, as she saw the wounded woman, covered with gore, and heard the exclamation from Janes, "here, here!" screamed "murder." Horror-struck at the bloody scene, she ran like one frantic, but soon took hold of Elvira's arm, and, with the assistance of Janes, led her out again towards her own door. Becoming faint from loss of blood, they at length set her down upon the green grass. There, for the first time after the deed, they saw Streeter standing in the front door, bleeding profusely, from the wounds inflicted upon his own throat. He was looking anxiously upon his dying wife. Janes stepped towards him and he said, "good bye!"

A boy was dispatched to alarm the neighbors. Janes, also started off for a physician, and Mrs. Dillaber stepped to a house close by for help. She returned in a moment, and found Mrs. Streeter sitting upon the grass where she had left her, and Streeter himself, sitting by her side, with the blood flowing from his own wound.

"What have you done?" she exclaimed at the frightful spectacle before her. "You have cut your own throat and your wife's, and are sitting here wallowing in each other's blood!"

"Here I die!" was the only reply offered by the miserable victim of blind infatuation.

Mrs. Dillaber soon left again to quiet her children, who were crying in the house. On her return she found the doomed Elvira, lying upon the grass weltering in her gore. Milton had moved towards the wood-shed, and there sat, the very picture of ghastly despair!

Help soon came. In the meantime, Streeter arose and passed again into his own house, after which the door was shut.

Several persons had now arrived, and while some were

attending to the murdered woman, Mr. Royal Smith opened the door to look after the murderer. He was seen in the hall, where he brandished his bloody razor, then darted immediately into the dining-room, and from thence into the bedroom, underneath the one where the first deed was perpetrated. There, he drew his razor again across his throat, and blood gushed afresh from the already bleeding wound.

Others had now come in,—among them, Ebenezer Edmonds. Streeter had dropped the razor upon the floor. He sprang quickly from the bedroom into the rear part of the dining-room, and, as they stood around him, he leaped, half phrenzied, with frightful impetuosity, across the room, and dashed his head with all his might against the resisting wall! It broke through the lathing, and sunk half way to his ears into the plaster. On either side the marks of his bloody hands were left imprinted upon the wall. Stunned by the blow, he rebounded and fell quivering upon the floor. But he recovered in a short time and was able to sit up. The last cut of the razor had severed the wind-pipe and deprived him of speech. He signified his wish, by motions to rise, but the attendant kept him sitting. A physician soon arrived; Streeter was taken up stairs and his wounds dressed. It was a horrible scene. Blood bespattered the walls and lay in puddles upon the floor, in the bedrooms above and below; and it was afterwards trodden and tracked by the horrified visitors all through the house.

The news of the tragic scene spread with astonishing rapidity. It fell like a thunder stroke upon all ears, and sent a thrill of horror all through the community. It was an event so uncommon in that quiet place, and yet so shocking and heart-rending, that crowds of spectators gathered around to witness the bloody scene. The murdered woman was taken from the gory grass, and conveyed to the front room of the house, she was about to leave. She had little thought of leaving in that tragic manner. The body was laid upon the floor, a spectacle for her trembling gazers, and preparatory to the legal investigation. It was a shocking sight to behold!

Elvira had once been quite handsome. A prominent expanding forehead, rose richly above her dark eyes, and gave grace to the curved lines of well traced eyebrows. Her cheeks were high but somewhat pale and sunken, her face rather broad but not disproportioned. Her lips, shrivelled, perhaps by the perturbations of life, opened upon a set of teeth of ivory whiteness. Her complexion was fair, yet in later life it wore a hue indicative of ill health. Her raven hair was tastefully arranged, and corresponded well with the glossy black satin dress that graced her whole person. That dress, which formed her dying attire, was neatly adjusted, and admirably arranged to display a form at once delicate and beautiful. It gave her an air altogether too lady-like, for one so uncouth and careless of dress and of manners as was Milton Streeter. In her outward appearance she was quite prepossessing, and so in her manners, unless, perchance, you happened to approach too near and see too much of her intellectual vacancy.

She now lay a murdered victim, stretched upon the floor in the front room of her own house. She was arrayed in that same dress and the same exterior arrangement, in which she had often before appeared. Blood bespattered her garments; her dishevelled locks had fallen around the horrible wound in her neck, and her appearance was shocking. The expression of agony and despair, which rested upon her countenance, as she issued from the fatal chamber, had disappeared and given place to the quiet repose of death. The deep wound gaped shockingly across her throat. It had severed the trachea or wind-pipe, and one or both of the carotid arteries. The Coroner's Jury were busy with their melancholy work until it was completed. Their verdict affirmed that Elvira Streeter came to her death by wounds inflicted upon her person by Milton W Streeter, her husband. And then the body was given into the hands of sympathizing female friends, to be prepared for the burial service.

Still, as the news extended, the people, anxious to ascertain the horrible details, came in large numbers to wit-



ness the bloody scene. All were horror-struck and indignant at the perpetrator of so inhuman a deed. And severe expressions and terrible imprecations were uttered against the unhappy man. Words of imprecation often fell from sweet voices, unaccustomed to the utterance of wrath ; but they were the natural outbursts of a righteous indignation. Humanity was shocked and saddened at the tragic deed ; and gave vent to its emotions, so just and natural, in expressions of fearful malediction.

The self-wounded murderer, unable to escape, was easily secured. A guard was placed over him ; the issue of his injury was yet uncertain. He might not see the light of another morning, and doubtless, it was his earnest prayer to sleep in death beside his murdered wife.

## CHAPTER IX.

Interview between Streeter and his Father, after the murder—Streeter permitted to view the remains of his wife, on the day of her interment—an exciting scene—Mrs. Streeter's funeral—Streeter's trial—conviction—sentence—commutation of sentence—phrenological description—conclusion.

The morning dawned, and the sun rose with smiles as bright as ever upon the desolated habitation of Milton Streeter. But not for him did those smiles radiate over the face of creation. Dreadfully wounded and dreadfully guilty, he had passed the night a miserable man. Apprehensive alike of dying and of living, he groaned outright from the pains of body and of mind. The hours of night, had, however, somewhat stilled the torturing turbulence of his spirit; but this only left him racked with deeper agony. He could now look more coolly over the events of the preceding day; and he began to offer excuses for the dark transaction. After the dressing of his wound he could speak a little, so as to be understood, but not without considerable difficulty. Among the reasons given for committing the deed, were these,—that his wife had choked him, or had made complaints against him, or again that he was in trouble. To some he stated that he was in liquor, and to others that he was not. Thus many frivolous excuses were presented; but the chief thought, over-mastering all others, was *trouble*. And this was doubtless the true ground. His trouble might indeed have been more of fancy than of reality; but to him it was real, and operated upon his burdened mind with terrible fatality.

During the day he was examined before a magistrate on a charge of murder and ordered to be committed for trial. Too weak, however, to be taken to prison immediately, he remained guarded in his own house.

Meantime a messenger was despatched to Sutton to inform his parents of the shocking tragedy which had just transpired. The news came like the voice of thunder upon their ears. The surviving parent of the murdered woman had already been apprised of the deed, and had come to the scene of blood. He was present indeed, the day before, during the transaction that preceded the murder. But now he was called again to a graver and more heart-rending scene. That ominous dream came fresh to his mind. Whether that dream had any counterpart in the things of life, or the events of individual history, whether it in any way reflected the memories of that unfortunate and sorrowing father, no man can tell. Amazed and afflicted, he was far from being incensed against the perpetrator of that awful crime. In fact, he appeared on the trial as a witness for the defence, testifying to the glassy eye and strange bewilderment, manifested by his guilty son-in-law on the afternoon of the murder.

But an overwhelming burden of affliction fell upon the murderer's own parents. They were astounded and filled with agony. No tongue can tell, no voice can speak the anguish of that mother! Borne down with the terrible event, she could not then come up to look upon her guilty son. And it was not until the next day that Mr. Streeter himself was able to come. He then summoned strength and fortitude to visit the offender. He entered the room with a heavy heart. He met the gaze of his guilty son. He essayed to speak, but emotion choked his voice and forbade his utterance. Tears followed copiously from father and son, and all present were melted at the mournful scene. But the deed was done—done in the phrenzy of excitement; still the offender was not to be cast out of the pale of affection, and treated as one belonging to another race of beings. The father recognized the obligation resting upon him, and pursued the course of duty which required a fair and full defence of his unfortunate son.

It was not yet certain that he would recover from his wounds. Symptoms, however, in a few days seemed to

indicate a favorable result, and he was watched with the more care and circumspection.

During this time, preparations had been made for the burial service of the murdered wife. And as the time drew near, the miserable husband was permitted to go below and take a final leave of the corpse. Assisted by his attendants, he entered the apartment. The sad spectacle, resulting from his own misdeeds, made a deep and sensible impression upon his mind. There she lay, arrayed in her winding sheet, tranquil as a morning in summer, and beautiful even in death. The room was thronged by those of her own sex, shocked at the terrible catastrophe, and drawn by curiosity and sympathy to the theatre of blood. The mind of the miserable man had again cooled down to its natural state. The phrenzy of the moment, which impelled the deed, had subsided. Reason and light, and the principles and affections of better years, came back for the moment, fresh upon him. The sight of his murdered wife, pale in death, yet lovely in her paleness, brought to his mind a sudden flash from the memory of other days. He loved still, and the fervor of that love returned to his heart with emotions wilder than ever. He asked to be brought near, that he might imprint a last kiss upon one he loved so tenderly. A sudden cry of indignation burst from the lips of those present, refusing the impious demand. It was the exclamation of nature itself. Commiseration for the murdered woman, forbade the rude embrace. The tender hearts of those standing near, shrunk from the thought that one who had wrought the bloody deed, should now be allowed to imprint upon its victim the kiss of desecration. But the murderer was now no longer brutal. His phrenzied feeling had passed away. Sad thoughts came into his mind. The memory of better days let in its light to illumine the darkness of his soul.

“ He hung his head—each nobler aim  
And hope and feeling which had slept  
From boyhood’s hour, that moment came,  
Fresh o’er him, and he wept—he wept!”



The boon he asked for was not allowed. He gazed for a sad moment upon the lovely form, and then was conveyed back to his chamber.

On the same day, the corpse of his wife was taken to the home of her youth, and, after the funeral obsequies, it was laid at rest under the green turf, by the side of her friends, who had gone before her to the land of dreamless sleepers.

Milton W. Streeter, the murderer, was now placed in a new relation, with respect to the community around. He had done violence to the majesty of a civil compact, framed for the common good, and the common protection of all the citizens; and he must give an account of that misdeed, at the bar of his country. He was soon after conveyed to the prison at Worcester, to await his trial and submit, as best he could, to the decision of a Jury of his peers. There he remained until the following June. In the meantime, the wound in his neck had completely healed, but it left him with a voice hoarse and husky. His long confinement had changed the complexion of his face. His general appearance was rugged and healthy, but his countenance was paler than natural.

The day at length arrived, (June 14th, 1849,) for the solemn ordeal. He was brought before the Court, and arraigned at the bar, on the charge of murder. The trial was conducted with great ability. Every effort which talent and skill and legal attainments could put forth, was made to obtain a verdict in his favor.

It is not necessary here to quote the evidence at length. All the essential points have been given in a more connected form, in the progress of this narrative. The fact set forth in the indictment, that a murder or homicide had been committed by the prisoner, was not controverted. The defence set up was simply a plea "for mitigation on account of the prisoner's irresponsibility, owing to mental imbecility." Several witnesses were examined, who testified to the previous state of his mind, as giving indications unfavorable to a correct and discriminating action. Among them were the friends and relatives, both of Mil-

ton himself and of his ill-fated companion. There can be no question that he was under the influence of what medical and medico-legal writers have denominated "moral mania"—a deranged state, not of the intellect, but of the moral faculties, and a deranged state too, resulting from some diseased action of the physical organism. Many distinguished writers have noted this form of insanity. Among them are Esquirol, Pinel, Andrew Combe, Georget and Pritchard. The latter writer describes it, as "consisting in a morbid perversion of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits and moral dispositions, without any notable lesion of the intellect or knowing and reasoning faculties, and particularly without any maniacal hallucination." This was precisely the case with Milton Streeter. The witnesses for the defence testified to many of the facts already related in this narrative—particularly, to the frequent talk of "trouble," his disposition to commit suicide, and, above all, his strange and wild appearance on the day of the murder. Even the rebutting witnesses, though unable to discover incompetency of judging or incapacity, "metaphysically," in his mental organization, were obliged to admit that there were "defects in his mind," that "his moral faculties were not of a high order," and that he was "improvident," "passionate," "heedless," "incautious," "reckless," "foolish in the field" and not safe to trust." And all this, together with the injury of his head, his frequent headache, his singular credulity, and his deep melancholy, would go far to make up the moral insanity of the writers already named. There may be danger, ordinarily, of admitting this principle into the administration of law; but when the subject is sent to prison and confined for life, society is protected and the danger is greatly diminished.

The trial occupied a part of two days. The case was then given to the jury who had it under consideration for about seven hours, when they returned a verdict of **GUILTY!**

On the next morning the unhappy man was brought into Court, and Chief Justice Shaw pronounced upon him

the usual sentence of death. The sentence however, was to be executed at such time as the Governor should appoint. It might have been the design of the Court, by this course, to refer the whole matter to the Executive, that time might be allowed for the friends of the condemned man, to make an effort for the commutation of his sentence.

By the verdict of the Jury, he was recommended to the merciful consideration of the Court. The case was accordingly brought before the Governor, with such additional evidence as had not been offered on the trial, and the result was that the sentence was commuted. The following paragraphs, from one of the secular journals, presents the reasons for Executive interference :

“ The Governor, by and with the unanimous advice of the Council, has commuted the punishment of Milton W. Streeter, who was under sentence of death for the murder of his wife at Southbridge, (Worcester co.,) to imprisonment at hard labor for life in the State Prison.

At the trial of Streeter, it was proved that when about two years old he fell into the fire, and severely burned one side of his head, laying bare the skull—it was also proved that during his childhood he was subject to severe fits—and it was the opinion of physicians and others that the above causes had impaired his mental faculties, which have always been considered below the ordinary standard. He was easily excited, and very impulsive—and the crime for which he was convicted, was probably committed while in a state of frenzy, occasioned by jealousy of his wife, to whom he appeared to be strongly attached—which jealousy was increased and aggravated by the indiscreet and reprehensible conduct of some young men of his neighborhood.

It appears that difficulties had arisen, and through the influence of their relatives, a separation had been agreed upon between himself and wife—and while they were in a room together, making some preparations for his immediate departure from the State, he suddenly cut her throat, with a razor, which he had about him, and also cut his

own throat very badly. She survived but a short time. He had never, as we understood, been known to threaten the life of his wife—but he had frequently threatened to destroy himself, declaring that he did not wish to live without her. The jury, it seems, were unable for seven hours to agree upon a verdict of guilty of wilful murder, and went into Court to ask whether they could render a verdict of murder in the second degree—but on being instructed that there was no such distinction known to our laws, they finally agreed upon a verdict of guilty, but they accompanied the verdict with an unanimous recommendation of the prisoner to the mercy of the Executive department of the Government.

After a full hearing of the case, the Committee on Pardons reported unanimously to the Council in favor of the commutation prayed for—which report was unanimously accepted, as above stated.”

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*Phrenological Characters of Milton W. Streeter and Mrs. Elvira W. Streeter, his wife, as given by Hosea F. Tingley, Practical Phrenologist.*

#### MILTON W. STREETER.

Streeter has rather an unfavorable temperament, being a predominance of the sanguine lymphatic. His animal and social organs predominate. His intellectual organs rather deficient, especially his reflective, viz : causality and comparison, giving a sloping appearance to his forehead. His moral organs, generally, but feebly developed, particularly veneration and benevolence. Amativeness, adhesiveness, destructiveness, combativeness, secretiveness and firmness, all large ; with hope and cautiousness small.

A person, having phrenological developments as above, would be destitute of moral principle ; reckless and heedless ; incapable of analytical reasoning ; implacable in his resentments. The doctrines of Christianity he would not



be likely to appreciate, nor would they be likely to have much effect upon his moral conduct. He would be coarse, vulgar and profane in his language. His conduct generally, would be repulsive to persons of good breeding. Having large firmness, adhesiveness and amateness, as a lover, he would be extremely persevering to obtain the object of his love : and in this respect would urge his suit with much warmth and impetuosity.

As a husband, he would be jealous of the partner of his bosom, would be suspicious of her fidelity to him, without a cause ; consequently having destructiveness, combativeness and secretiveness large, would treat her (when his jealousy was excited,) with the utmost cruelty, without telling her the reason of his wrath. Under strong excitement, his destructiveness being highly inflamed by anger and having cautiousness small, would commit murder. Having small hope, he would be melancholy, viewing things in their worst aspect, as far as they related to himself. In fine, he has a very unhappy phrenological organization.

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#### ELVIRA W. STREETER.

Mrs. Streeter has a predominance of the nervous bilious temperament.

Her social organs, generally, are fully developed, giving her a disposition to mingle much in society. She would be fond of participating in parties of pleasure. Having approbateness large and also ideality, she would be fond of show, and she would be anxious to be the centre of attraction in the social circles. She has amateness full or large, hence she would be fond of the person and company of the opposite sex. She would take much pains to appear to the best advantage in the society of young men, and receive their flattery with much satisfaction. She could never be satisfied to live a life of single blessedness ; hence she would manifest a great deal of solicitude to obtain a congenial partner to be a sharer of her joys, and sorrows through the journey of life. Not having causality more than average or moderate, therefore

not possessing a very strong judgment, she would be liable not to make the most judicious selection for a husband: one that would diminish her sorrows and augment her happiness. She would be very miserable if crossed in her wishes, more so than the generality of females. She has benevolence large, consequently she would be kind, obliging to others, willing to succor those in distress. Firmness not being large, she would be fickle minded. Constructiveness and imitation being large, she would manifest a great deal of mechanical ingenuity, succeed well in learning to do nice needle work, and in this respect display much taste.

On the whole, she is a lady of warm, confiding passions, of strong but rather fickle attachments, fond of the gaieties of life, without much discrimination, hence she would be liable to be deceived in judging of human character.

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#### CONCLUSION.

The order for commutation having been received by the proper officer at Worcester, Milton W. Streeter was removed from the jail in that place, near the last of December 1849, and conveyed to the State Prison at Charlestown there to be immured for life, and shut out from the active scenes of the great world. And thus, more from ungovernable impulse, than actual crime, with "malice prepense," has a very singular young man, in the prime of life, been consigned to a living death!

But this, perhaps, is the best disposition which the civil authorities could possibly make of him. He is an unsafe man to be at large in the community. His mind is without balance or guiding force; his passions are uncontrollable; and no one, therefore, can calculate on the results of their unrestrained violence. He is utterly disqualified to encounter the conflicts of human life, and incapacitated even for bearing its little jostles with that equanimity which would furnish a safeguard against outrage. He is liable at any time, in the heat of passion, to injure others as he injured his own companion. Treated with a

tender care and discrimination by every one, he might pass along comfortably, but, at the same time, rudely and lazily, through the world. But he would always be one of those unfortunate and improvident beings, whom the community must support. And besides, it would be impossible that, in passing through the world, he should always receive that discriminating treatment essential to his quietness. But confined in prison, under the management of careful overseers, he will be free from the "troubles" that have perplexed him, and the cares and disturbing influences that have enraged him. Many, in the place where he has lived, will hope that he may spend his days within that place of safety. They will dread to have him let loose again, to mingle unrestrained in the tumultuous affairs of the world. They will fear his sudden passions, but more than all, an outbreak of some long cherished reuenge.

His friends and kindred will be relieved from their constant anxiety on his account. They will know that his condition, though by no means desirable, will be comparatively free from danger, and they will bow submissive to the stern decree that has assigned him a place, for life, within the walls of a prison. Though a companion of rogues, he is not a hardened villian, and will be under a discipline best suited to the peculiar construction of his mind. He will be made to labor without disturbance, and to earn his livelihood without the cares and perplexities incident to the common affairs of life. He will be placed under moral and religious instruction, unaffected by the vicious influences that surround the life of man in the busy world. His prison home may, therefore, be made subservient to the interests, both of himself, his friends, and the community at large. There we leave him.

## MORAL REFLECTIONS ADDED BY THE PUBLISHER.

The foregoing history of Milton W. Streeter should teach the reader a useful lesson. It should teach him to put a guard upon his animal passions, to keep them under subjection to his moral faculties. There is no person, however exalted his intellect, who does not need to have his mind moulded, and chastened by the high and ennobling principles of the *Christian Religion*, in order that he may pass through the journey of life with honor to himself, and be a blessing to his race. Had Milton Streeter, in his early life, cordially embraced the doctrines of the Bible, and been guided by its precepts, he might now have breathed the pure air of heaven, enjoyed the blessings of society, and his soul been unstained by the awful crime of murder. But he had no taste for reading, no respect for the Christian doctrines and precepts, and no relish for the ordinances of moral and religious instruction. He disregarded even the paternal precept and example, that would have called him often to the house of prayer, and made him a constant attendant there, and a devout worshiper of the living God. He was a reckless sabbath-breaker; he chose on that day usually to mingle with the vicious and the vulgar. He preferred the intercourse of such, to the society of those who feared God and conversed on holy and divine things. His father is a good man—a *Christian* in life and practice. Earnestly did he desire, and often did he admonish, his intractable son to forsake the companionship of such loose and licentious characters, and associate with men of better principles; often did he entreat him to observe the Sabbath and be governed by the precepts of religion. But all these entreaties were distasteful, and fell upon unlistening ears. A singular fatality rested over the unfortunate young man. He seemed incapable of appre-



ciating the blessings of a Christian life. Dark and unhal-  
lowed passions governed his spirit; and the result was,  
that he imbrued his hands in the life's blood of his wife,  
and thus violently outraged the most endearing rela-  
tions of life. Reader, look at it. What a tragic scene!  
Streeter had made his addresses to a young and beau-  
tiful female by the name of Elvira W. Houghton. She  
listened to his story of love, which came from his im-  
passioned heart. He sought her hand and heart, and  
was accepted. The marriage ceremony was perform-  
ed, and they became one. The solemn obligation to  
protect her through the varied scenes of life, he had  
taken: but how well did he keep it? In thirteen short  
months from the time that they were united in the  
bonds of matrimony, she was slain by his wicked hands,  
and thus by his agency she had to exchange the bridal  
satin for her winding sheet, and what was the procuring  
cause of all this?—jealousy! Streeter was of a jealous dis-  
position, and instead of guarding against that wicked-  
ness, he fostered the dark passion, and soon after he was  
married, it (jealousy,) took possession of his heart,  
and like the internal fires of Vesuvius, it continued to  
rankle and fester there, until it spent its force in the atro-  
cious murder of his wife. All may not be troubled with  
this weakness, (jealousy,) as was Milton Streeter, but most  
men have besetting sins, hard to be overcome, and if cher-  
ished, these will unavoidably lead their victims into serious  
difficulty; for the “way of the transgressor is hard,” but by a  
firm reliance on the Divine Being, and a strict adherence  
to his law there is safety; to which I commend the reader,  
and ask him to look to that source to overcome his imper-  
fections, and to be delivered from the thralldom and power  
of his sinful inclinations.



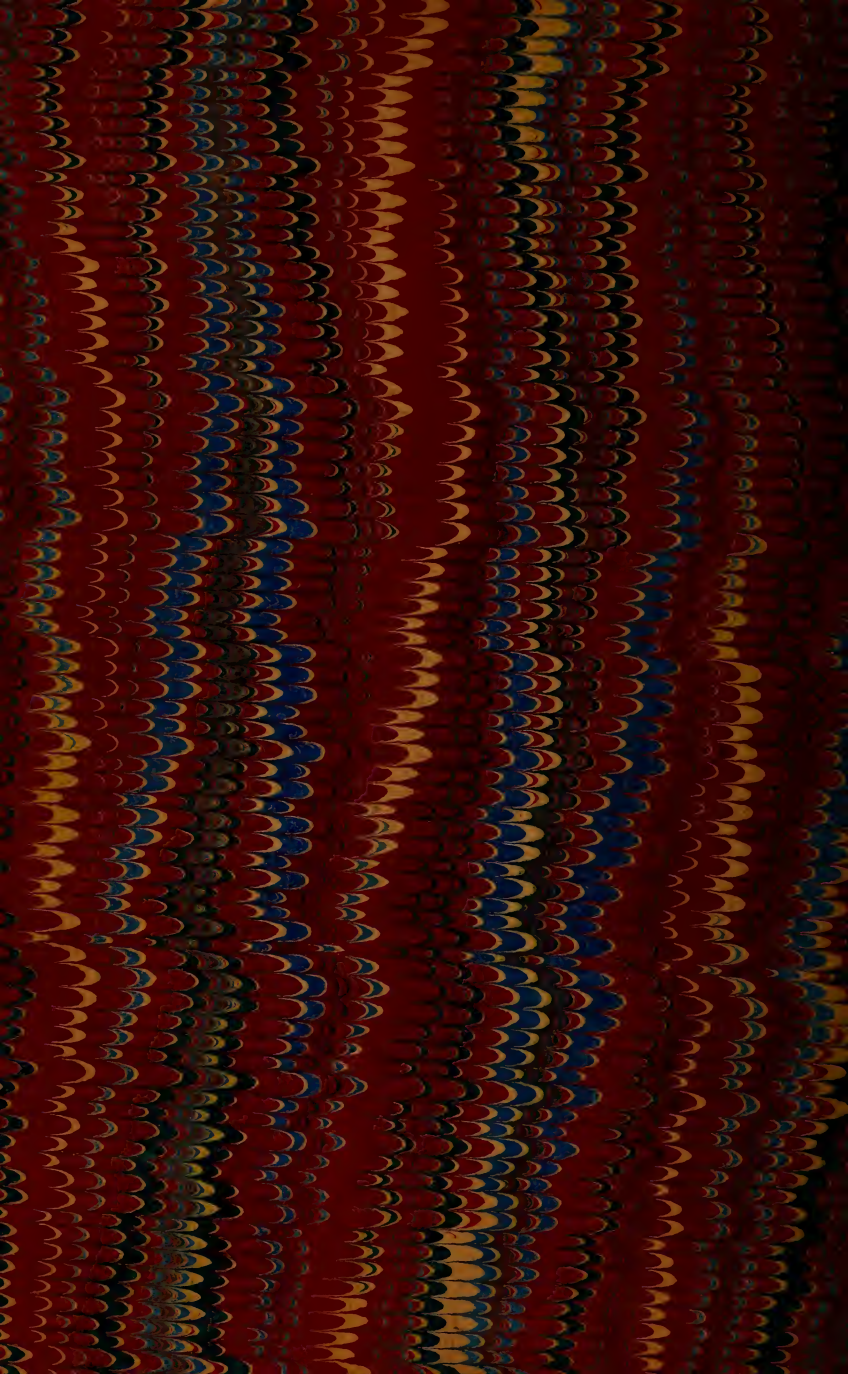


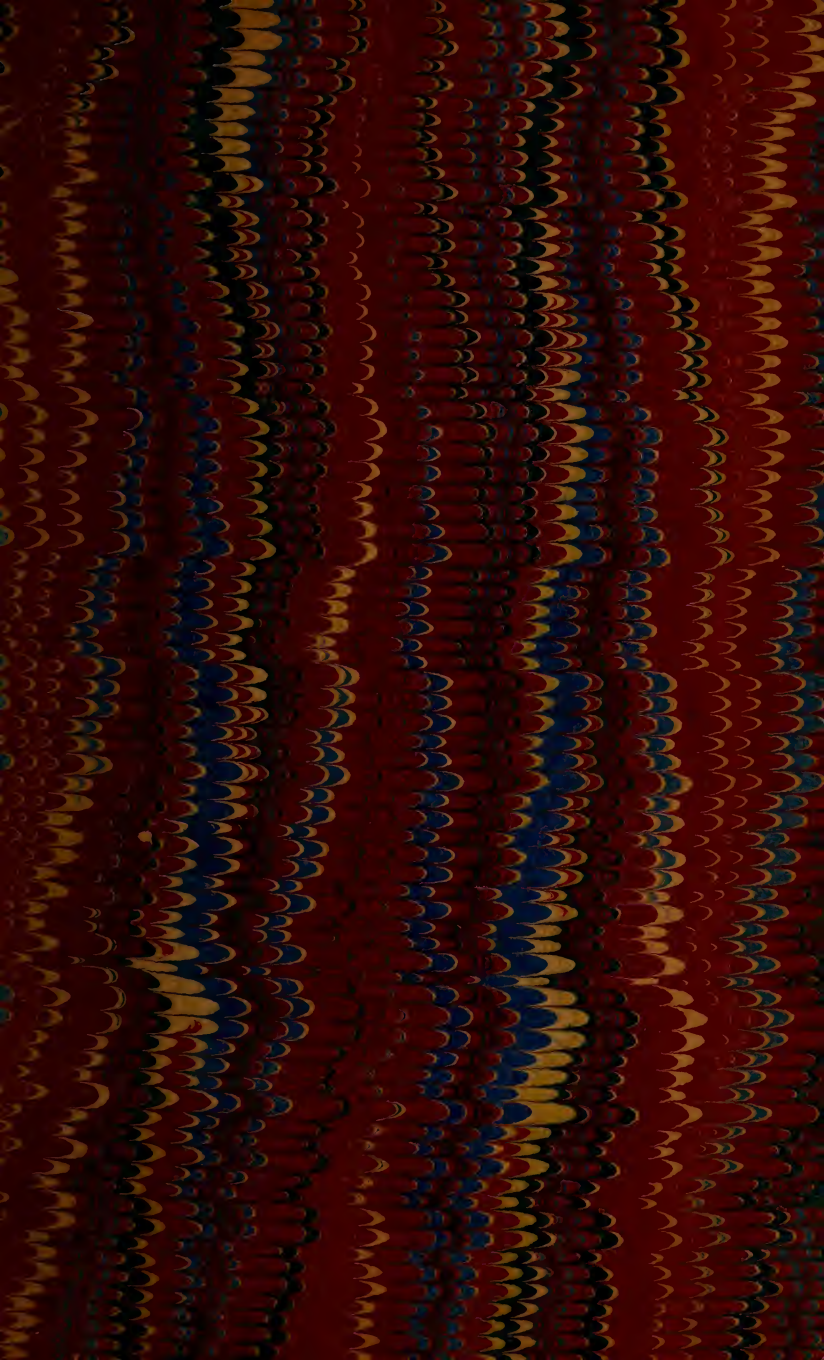






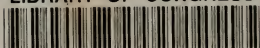








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